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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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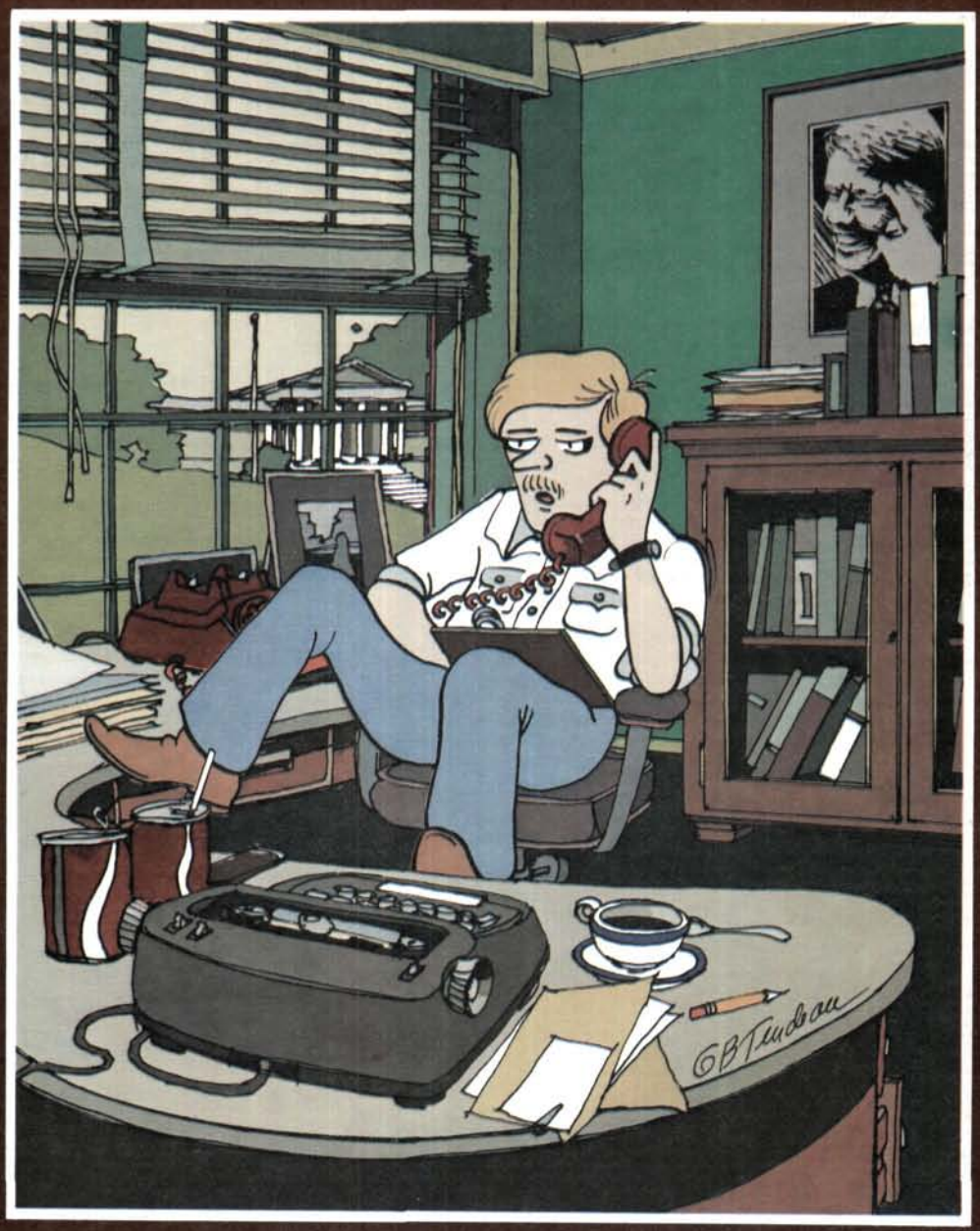

Garry Trudeau Interviews the Secretary of Symbolism

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TRB

from Washington
May 20, 1978

Unobstructed View

A front-row seat at the Washington melodrama has been worth every inflated cent it cost in the past fortnight, and it is likely to get even more valuable. There are a dozen intertwined themes—the background one is that American government is at its worst when the president is weak and when Congress tries to take over. Whether you sneer at Carter, or merely tut-tut him, the fact remains that American governmental initiative is built around the president and that when he can't function you have breakdowns, like Congressional failure for over a year to pass an energy bill in the face of an emergency, enhancing trade deficits, decline of the dollar, inflation and international confusion. Is it a failure of national will? Europe asks. Partly, yes; partly it's Washington deadlock.

Another developing theme is the temptation of demoralized Republicans to drown their sorrows in the jug of partisan foreign policy. We saw that in the debate over the Panama Canal treaties: despite all that minority leader Howard Baker could do the Republican senators voted 22 to 16 against the treaties, and came within an inch of defeating them (under the constitutional two-thirds ratification requirement).

Now the 38 Republican senators have got out a 29-page manifesto deploring the entire Carter foreign policy (which is all right, if you can figure what it is). They particularly emphasize a hard line toward the Soviets, and a demand for more armaments. Example—the Republicans' collective heart bleeds for the "Cambodian people," and the report tells Carter to go in there and do something about it right away.

As a sidelight to the above I see signs that Congress is moving toward a hard line, warplane-rattling mood, and a "soft-on-Communism" line. It's just my personal judgment, but I don't think any strategic arms limitation treaty (SALT) with Moscow has a prayer today of getting the two-thirds majority required. A mere 34 senators can veto it. The Panama treaties came within one vote of defeat. SALT negotiations are technical. The public can't understand "sonics," "Backfire bombers" and things like that and they must decide as an act of faith, a theological test. Do they trust Carter, or do they trust Senator Jackson and the hawks? A miracle might make the two lie down together (or whatever hawks and doves do) but it seems unlikely. Only one man could get through a SALT treaty right now, I think—Richard Nixon. He was so anti-Communist it hurt and so he could go to Peking and Moscow. No Democrat is apt to succeed.

We may have a thrilling climax to SALT: Moscow finally signing the thing, the Senate voting 65 to 35 in favor which, of course, kills it. The cold war consequences could be catastrophic. I don't like to think about them.

Another major theme here is the president's strained efforts to get control of the situation, a tricky job since his opposition comes from a Congress of his own party. One could argue that what Carter needs is a *Republican* Congress; then he could lambaste it the way Harry Truman did in 1948. Unfortunately for Carter the Republicans are so inept they may not make even a standard midterm come-back this fall, let alone capture Congress.

The comic relief is the effort of Jody Powell to repackage the president like a lagging breakfast food. "We need to get him out of the White House more," Jody told a group of reporters earnestly; "if anything, I think, we erred on the side of caution." Yes, the president had a test run in his new stance on his three-day western trip; practically everybody agrees it was a success. Jody insists it isn't a "new" Carter; it's just a revival of the "real" Carter who is feeling more at home now in Washington. Carter attacks the inadequacies of lawyers and doctors and takes a swipe at the Soviets in Africa for their "innate racism towards black people."

It would be folly to call it unimportant. Don't forget that an unconventional candidate, making an unconventional campaign, landed in the White House; Jimmy Carter is being unconventional again. If he can show some real successes in Congress, to prove that he's really in charge, his prestige could go up a lot. He won on Panama, blocked the inflationary farm bill; may get energy, civil service and military aid bills; may get the revival of aid to Turkey, tax cuts. Critics call Carter vacillating; he isn't vacillating on the labor reform bill that comes up in Congress May 15: he told a group of union leaders at the White House that the controversial measure is "comprehensive, badly needed, and moderate." You wouldn't get a Republican president saying that, telling labor stiffs that "it's not right to have an employer acting illegally to delay union elections; it's not right to have an illegally discharged employee deprived of compensation for months and even years."

The last days of the Middle East warplane package battle have developed an hysteria in Washington like that at the end of the presidential election. Unlike an election, the scars may not quickly heal. Words were spoken better left unsaid. Senator Lowell Weicker, in a passionate speech to the convention of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee here on May 8, seemed to liken Carter foreign affairs adviser Brzezinski to the Nazis. Throughout history, Weicker said, national leaders blamed "their problems on the Jews." If there is "a meaningful distinction" between this and "the signals which Brzezinski is sending today, I don't know what it is" (Applause). If "I had a National Security Adviser who singled out American Jews as an impediment to my policies," Weicker continued, "I would have his resignation before sundown!" (Storm of applause). When presidential counsel Robert Lipshutz made a rebuttal he was listened to but got frequent boos.

It is not easy to write honestly about this. My own judgment is that the importance of the warplane deal to Israel was less vital than some of the other elements involved, and that harangues like Weicker's may be self-defeating. It would be surprising if there were not some anti-Jewish sentiment latent in the United States. It would be dismaying to polarize it by intemperate attacks. No question, it is a shock to discover that Israel cannot take America necessarily for granted. The breach with the White House may be irreparable. On the other hand it might be wiser to cool off, and start the search once more for Middle East accommodation.

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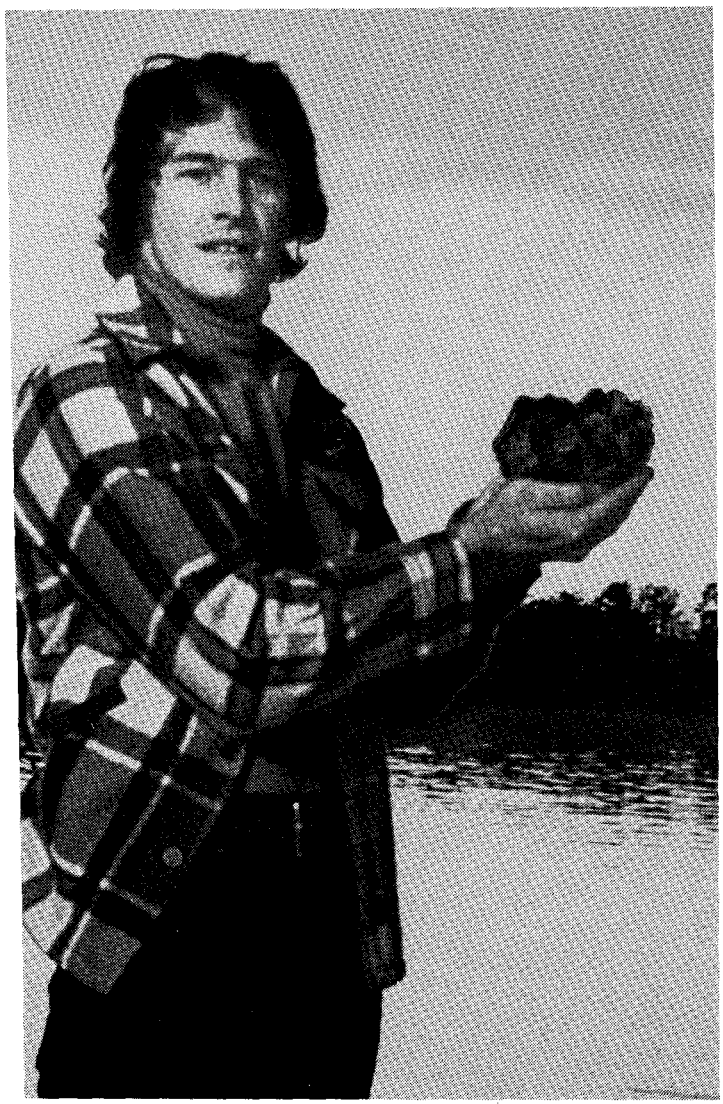

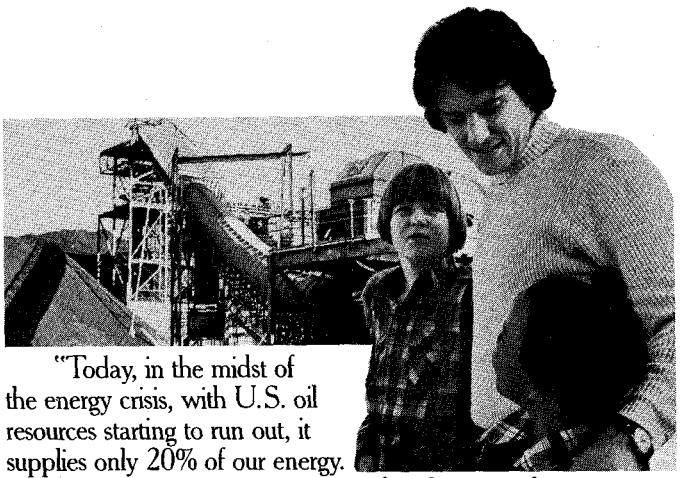

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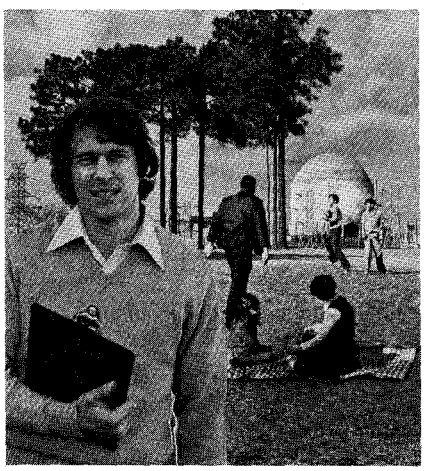

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Cover: Duane P. Delacourt in his office in the Executive Office Building, overlooking the west wing of the White House. Photo by Annie Liebovitz. Exclusive interview on page 20.

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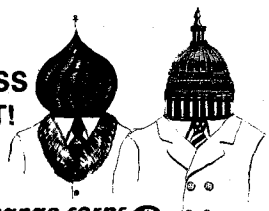

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

May 20, 1978

The Trouble With Lawyers

"I am not a lawyer," President Carter declared in Los Angeles on May 4, echoing President Nixon's famous assertion, "I am not a crook." Nevertheless, even in his criticism of the legal profession Carter appears to be suffering from the legal mind rot that affects so much thinking on public issues today. Lawyers may wince at the president's harsh words, but they can take comfort from his policy recommendations; if enacted, these would encourage the intrusion of the law into areas of social life that so far have escaped its tentacles, would drive more and more people into the courts and would generate lots of business for lawyers.

Carter's analysis of the defects of the criminal law is bizarre to the point of demagoguery. From his personal observation of prisons, he said, "I know that nearly all inmates are drawn from the ranks of the powerless and the poor." This he blames on the process of law: "A child of privilege frequently receives the benefit of the doubt; a child of poverty seldom does." No doubt it is true that protestations of innocence and/or sincere regret are treated more generously when uttered by an affluent or influential accused (the name Bert Lance comes to mind) and "too often these big shot crooks escape the full consequences of their acts." But surely there is a more obvious reason why there are more poor people than rich people in jail: rich people can more easily afford the luxury of obeying the law. If President Carter finds this disturbing—as he should—we have good news: it's not the fault of the legal system, which after all is largely beyond his control, but rather the fault of the social system, which is his primary responsibility. We submit that as long as there are poor people, they will always be over-represented in jail. The president can do more about this than the legal profession can.

Carter's general theme was that the problem with being poor is that it deprives you of sufficient access to lawyers. "Ninety percent of our lawyers serve 10 percent of our people," Carter said, echoing the kind of statistics one often hears about income distribution and property ownership. Not only does he endorse legal services for the poor, which we also endorse with deep reservations (see "The Rich Get Rich and the Poor Get Lawyers," *TNR*, Sept. 24), but he also endorses prepaid legal plans and clinics for the middle class. There is no surer way to produce "excessive litigation" and to "encourage disputes in our society rather than resolving them" (to borrow one of Carter's own subthemes) than to promote the spread of legal insurance, which is what these plans amount to. Universal health insurance, though obviously desirable, has sent medical costs through the roof. Do we really want to encourage people to take their disgruntlements to lawyers as readily as they now take their ailments to doctors?

Carter also attacked "arbitrary procedural rules" that prevent "groups with distinct interests to defend—in civil rights, economic questions, environmental causes and others"—from getting access to courts. He specifically endorsed "efforts to broaden the use of class action and to expand the definition of standing to sue." These limitations are indeed irksome to those who wish to use the legal process, rather than the legislative one, as the driving force of social change. But they are not arbitrary. They are intended to make sure that when lawyers request courts to act, they do so on behalf of actual people with actual grievances; and that when courts impose their will on people, they are resolving disputes and not making public policy.

The real trouble with the American legal system is the amount of society's resources it diverts from truly creative and productive activity. We see this on the level of the individual lawsuit, and we see it in whole industries paralyzed by overly complex and often illogical legal restraints. It is hardest to see, but most damaging, on the level of the individual lawyer. As Carter pointed out, the United States has three times as many lawyers per capita as England and 21 times as many as Japan. Year by year our system of social rewards entices many of our brightest and most energetic young adults into this essentially fruitless activity as their life's work. How many scientific breakthroughs and great novels and management

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innovations have we lost by this absurd arrangement?

Judging from his so-called attack on lawyers, President Carter's vision of a perfect society is one where every petty criminal gets a full trial with 12 jurors and the entire panoply of procedural rights and Edward Bennett Williams for the defense; where the poorest people can spend as much money and time on legal affairs as the richest do now; where we all must pay to support the legal profession whether we use it or not, but where considerations of cost are not allowed to interfere with the decision to bring suit; where any person or group with any gripe about anything is encouraged to express that gripe by taking it to court. The American Bar Association should relax. With enemies like Carter, who needs friends?

On the Other Hand

The F-15 Sale

Of all the public debates conducted in the United States recently, few have been so characterized by flying garbage as the controversy just ending over President Carter's plan to sell 60 F-15 fighter planes to Saudi Arabia. In a truly awesome propaganda offensive, the government of Israel and its American allies have flooded the press and Congress with assertions that the F-15s represent a dire military threat to Israel's security. The truth is that Israel will continue to enjoy overwhelming military superiority over its Arab neighbors despite the new Saudi planes. The deeper truth is that the F-15 fight is really not about military issues at all, but political ones. Israel does not want the US-Saudi "special relationship" to eclipse the traditional US-Israeli special relationship. Israel does not want the US to develop a habit of submitting to Saudi "oil blackmail." And Israel's political allies in Washington want to beat the Carter administration in Congress, to show the administration that it dare not muscle Israel on Middle East peace issues. Looking at the F-15 dispute in all its aspects, I have to disagree with *TNR*'s editorial of last week opposing the sale of F-15s to the Saudis.

Some of the most vivid items in the anti-F-15 arsenal are maps distributed by the so-called "Israel lobby" and published in newspaper ads showing that the Saudi airbases at Turayf, Gurayet and Tabuk are just 10 minutes, 12 minutes and six minutes flying time from targets in Israel. Most attention and emotion have fastened on the vulnerability of Israel's port of Eilat to planes based in Tabuk, 125 miles away. The ads and leaflets fail to point out that Eilat already is vulnerable to Saudi gun emplacements at Haql, on the Gulf of Aqaba. More important, they neglect the obvious truth that if Israeli cities are close to Saudi airbases, then Saudi airbases also are within range of Israeli planes. The fact is that Saudi Arabia is far more vulnerable to Israeli attack than the reverse. As if to rub Saudi Arabia's nose in this fact, Israeli airplanes regularly violate Saudi airspace, according to Saudi military authorities, and at least twice, in 1976 and 1977, Israeli F-4 Phantom jets (supplied by the United States) have buzzed Tabuk.

In the fall of 1976, the Saudi government complained to the United States about the low-flying passes and the US asked Israel to desist. "It doesn't violate the terms of our sales agreement," a State Department official said, "but it's rude and provocative. The Saudis show remarkable restraint when it happens. You can imagine what the Israelis would do if somebody flew fighters over their territory." In 1977, according to an expert who was in Tabuk at the time, helpless Saudi commanders had to order their pilots to stay on the ground during several minutes of supersonic buzzing by two Israeli planes. Saudi radar picked up other Israeli Phantoms waiting at a distance to pounce in case the Saudis had attacked the two visible planes. A disaster would have occurred. Saudi Arabia's only interceptors are aged British Lightnings which the Saudi air force is afraid to use even to practice dog-fighting maneuvers, for fear they will fall apart in flight.

Part of Israel's case against the F-15s is that Saudi Arabia doesn't need them, and the administration response is that Saudi Arabia faces threats from Iraq and South Yemen, both radical states allied with the Soviet Union. But the truth is that Saudi Arabia would like to be able to deter attacks on its territory from Israel, too, and it would also like not to be utterly defenseless against Iran, in case that powerhouse made a move for hegemony over the whole Persian Gulf. Saudi Arabia also wants the planes as a matter of national pride. To be one of the richest countries on earth and have to make do with falling-apart defensive aircraft is a situation that no country can reasonably be expected to tolerate.

And of course the Saudis will not tolerate it. If we refuse them F-15s, they are going to buy French Mirage F-1s now and F-2000s in the mid-1980s. The F-1, with all the added gadgetry that France will be happy to supply, is a more formidable offensive weapon than the F-15, considering the fact that we will not furnish comparable electronic and missile systems. If the Israelis are worried that Saudi Arabia might transfer its planes to another Arab country in the event of war, they should be more concerned about Mirages than F-15s. The French do not enforce the no-transfer clauses in their contracts, and other Arab countries will have pilots who know how to fly F-1s, but not F-15s.

The Israelis contend, and *TNR* has argued at length, that F-15s would turn Saudi Arabia into a confronta-

(continued on page 8)

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Correspondence

A bad trip

To the editors:

The article by Kurtz and Strauss entitled "The Drug Abuse Hustle" (*TNR*, Apr. 15) insofar as it refers to me and my wife, Muriel Nellis, is a shining example of irresponsible journalism, a malady born of expedient commercialism which causes us all to suffer. My respect for *The New Republic*, which I have been reading for 35 years, has sunk to an all-time low as a result of your apparent willingness to publish such a piece without carefully checking its accuracy.

Let's first examine particularly the history of the Kurtz-Strauss frolic. Some time ago, Strauss worked for the University of Miami, which had a NIDA contract revoked by NIDA and given to a firm in D.C. My "sources" tell me that Strauss's boss in Miami has had a vendetta going with the NIDA official who transferred that contract. When Strauss first came to see me, she conspiratorily made it plain she was going to get even with NIDA for screwing her boss. Talk about private agendas! Here is a clear instance of an alleged newsperson using the columns of a newspaper and a magazine to "get even" for her former boss and perhaps for the loss of her job in Miami. However, so far as is known, Strauss has never otherwise made public her own personal interest in the story. No one has probed her *personal* devotion to "getting even." No one has probed her personal relationship with her former employer in Miami that would have so embittered her with respect to this story that she would willingly join with Kurtz in a pseudo "investigative" piece that so blatantly disregards ethics and full truth. Should a person passing herself off as a "reporter," in the interests of justice and fair play be required to disclose a personal interest in a story? Is Strauss conducting a personal course of vengeance without telling anyone the real reason for it? I leave this question to *The New Republic*'s sense of evenhandedness and to journalism's integrity.

On page 10 of the April 15 issue, the following appears: "The network extends to the House Narcotics Committee, which is supposed to oversee NIDA." The language which follows this sentence links me and my wife with this alleged "network." But not a shred of truth is presented to support the insidious inference stated, namely, that there is a network of drug abuse "hustlers" of which we are a part. Kurtz quotes a statement I made to him and Strauss in which, in part, I said the staff was then short on investigators, but neglects to write that I also told him the committee's Interim Report published in February 1977 was critical of NIDA and the federal demand reduction efforts. See for yourself if the committee was "soft" on NIDA in the earliest stages of the committee's existence when my staff consisted of seven or eight persons, mostly secretaries and support personnel.

The article goes on to slip in a real zinger: "Maybe he can get his wife to help." What a miserable gratuitous insult! The committee (with which I became associated *almost two years after my wife, a* respected professional, *received a NIDA contract to investigate the growing problem of drugs, alcohol and their effect on women*) has consistently, beginning in early 1977, just after my first association with it, criticized NIDA severely. I told Kurtz and Strauss that high officials of NIDA had complained bitterly to me and the members about this criticism, but Kurtz and Strauss did not mention this fact in their efforts to smear me and my wife.

Finally, let's see what the world thinks of my wife's work on, to quote Kurtz and Strauss, "a national coalition of women's issues in substances abuse." I enclose only a few responses to the releases of the facts gathered by her and her colleagues. She has been hailed for her work by the White House, Congress, the public and responsible media. For them, as for me, she needs no defense nor any gratuitous insults from the likes of Kurtz and Strauss.

My wife and I have earned our reputations as dedicated professionals in our individual capacities. Is this a sin? Should it be the subject of derision and innuendo by questionable persons pretending to be objective reporters? Or should it be lauded?

The New Republic should exercise some "oversight" to assure that their facts and contributors are on target, before allowing attacks on decent people doing difficult, honest work.

Joseph L. Nellis
Chief Counsel
House Narcotics Committee

In reply:

Mr. Nellis is understandably upset, but he mentions no actual inaccuracy in Howie Kurtz's article. His innuendos about Valerie Strauss, who assisted Mr. Kurtz in his research, are absurd and unattractive. Readers who wish to examine the documents Mr. Nellis has sent us (such as a copy of his wife's invitation to a recent White House reception) should inquire at this office.

No hit parade

To the editors:

The Nazis who are bent on commoving in Skokie ("Springtime for Skokie," *TNR*, Apr. 22 and "Hard Times for the ACLU," *TNR*, Apr. 15) are, by the standards of those who impose and most who support their right, an impotent minority of maniacal miscreants for whom victory in the courts would be a useless token and defeat an excuse to revile American justice as repressive.

The ACLU is busy on diverse fronts defending their right to demonstrate and itself against attacks challenging its commitment to provide them with First Amendment justice.

In this vital constitutional controversy, a lot of us would either stand more firmly on the side we have chosen or switch to the other if we knew that the ACLU, traditionally the respected authority, would have been so eager to take them on as clients if it regarded them—not as the feckless goons that they are—but as a force to be reckoned with and for whom a victory would be a step toward recapturing the glories of Hitler's nazidom.

Maybe Jim Mann, who wrote "Hard Times for the ACLU," could get us a responsible answer from ACLU—or even hazard his own.

George Dreyfuss Hurwitz
Woodmere, N.Y.

To the editors:

Your editorial "Springtime for Skokie" (*TNR*, Apr. 22) was upsetting. Your

(continued on page 39)

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tion state, meaning (so the Israeli case goes) that Israel would have to launch a preemptive strike against Saudi Arabia in the event of a Middle East war. The same situation would apply, however, if Saudi Arabia had F-1s. Of course Israel might consider staying its hand in a crisis to see whether the Saudis acted like a confrontation state. In past wars, the Saudis have done no more than commit a token brigade to the Arab cause, and hardly a shot has ever been fired between Saudi and Israeli forces.

If Saudi Arabia did decide to get into a war, it is unlikely that they would use F-15s to attack Israeli territory. F-15s can be used as bombers, but it would be stupid for the Saudis to do so. The Saudis have F-5s that could do the job already, and if the F-15s were shot down, what would Saudi Arabia have left with which to defend its own territory against the Israeli retaliatory raids that would follow with devastating certainty?

There is no question that Israeli military planners would rather not have their lives complicated by 60 Saudi F-15s, but the fact is that these are not the terror weapons that Israeli and Israel-lobby propaganda have made them out to be. I doubt that the Israelis believe their own propaganda. According to testimony last week by Defense Secretary Harold Brown, Israel anticipated that Saudi Arabia would get the F-15s at the time it made its request for weapons. Israel probably is going to get enough new planes to more than compensate for the Saudi force.

But while Israel's security has made a useful ground on which to argue against the F-15 sale, it is not the most important matter at issue. A debate is going on within Saudi Arabia's royal court over how favorably disposed Saudi Arabia should be toward the US on questions of oil production and pricing and investment of oil revenues. For the Saudis, too, the F-15 has become something of a test of the US-Saudi special relationship. No one is exactly sure what will happen if the F-15s are refused, but Israel has been willing to take the risk, in order to prevent the US-Saudi relationship from overshadowing the traditional US-Israeli one.

President Carter compounded Israel's nervousness by submitting his requests for planes for Israel, Saudi Arabia and Egypt on an all-or-none package basis—telling Israel, in effect, that US concern for its security is on no better than a par, now, with US friendship for the Arab countries. It might have been better if Carter submitted the requests separately, but Carter feared that the Israel lobby would have easily defeated the Saudi F-15 sale if it stood alone. There is no question that Israel was out to sink the Saudi sale, and so Carter may have had no choice.

A good relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia is important to us. It should also be important to Israel. Israel's well-being depends on the well-being of the United States and the West, and our well-being depends on Saudi oil. We are all tied together and we have the same enemies: the Soviet Union and the radical Arabs. It was from an Israeli official that I first heard the idea of fashioning a "winner's circle" of the US, Israel, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan (and maybe Syria, one day) to fend off onslaughts from the Soviets and radicals. It still seems a worthy strategy. But such an entente can't be put together if the Israelis try to poison US-Saudi relations.

Israel is worried, of course, that America's oil dependency will make us subject to Saudi "blackmail" again and again. "What if they say, 'an Arab Jerusalem, or no oil?'" an Israeli diplomat asked recently. "What will you do?" The Saudis have not made such a demand and they probably never will, because to do so would play into the hands of the radicals they fear.

At the same time, I understand the Israeli fears. If the Saudis get used to getting everything they want from the US, they will escalate their requests. So the Israelis have every right to resist, and to take their case to American public opinion. But there ought to be a limit to the tactics Israel and her friends use. They have started a whispering campaign that Saudi Arabia is not "moderate" at all—in particular, that it has been trying to sink the Sadat peace initiative and has been urging Jordan's King Hussein to stay out of negotiations with Israel. So far as I can determine, both widely disseminated reports are false. Pro-Israeli lobbyists have tried to make the F-15 fight into a test of political strength between themselves and the Carter administration, whose Middle East policies they deem hostile to Israel's best interests. It appeared certain, at one point, that the Israel lobby would succeed in breaking up the Carter arms package and defeating the Saudi portion, but now it seems that Saudi Arabia will get its planes, in what has to be counted a Carter victory.

In the process, an excess of venom has been generated. Senator Lowell Weicker's speech to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee dinner in Washington last week, in which he likened Zbigniew Brzezinski to Adolph Hitler, was the demagogic nadir of the campaign.

M.M.K.

White House Watch

Change of Life

In Spokane, Washington, a night or two before the President arrived on the last stop of a western tour that had taken him to Denver, Los Angeles and Portland, Dan Lee and Ruth Hand Lenke got acquainted and started talking. Lee is from Eastman, Georgia. He was

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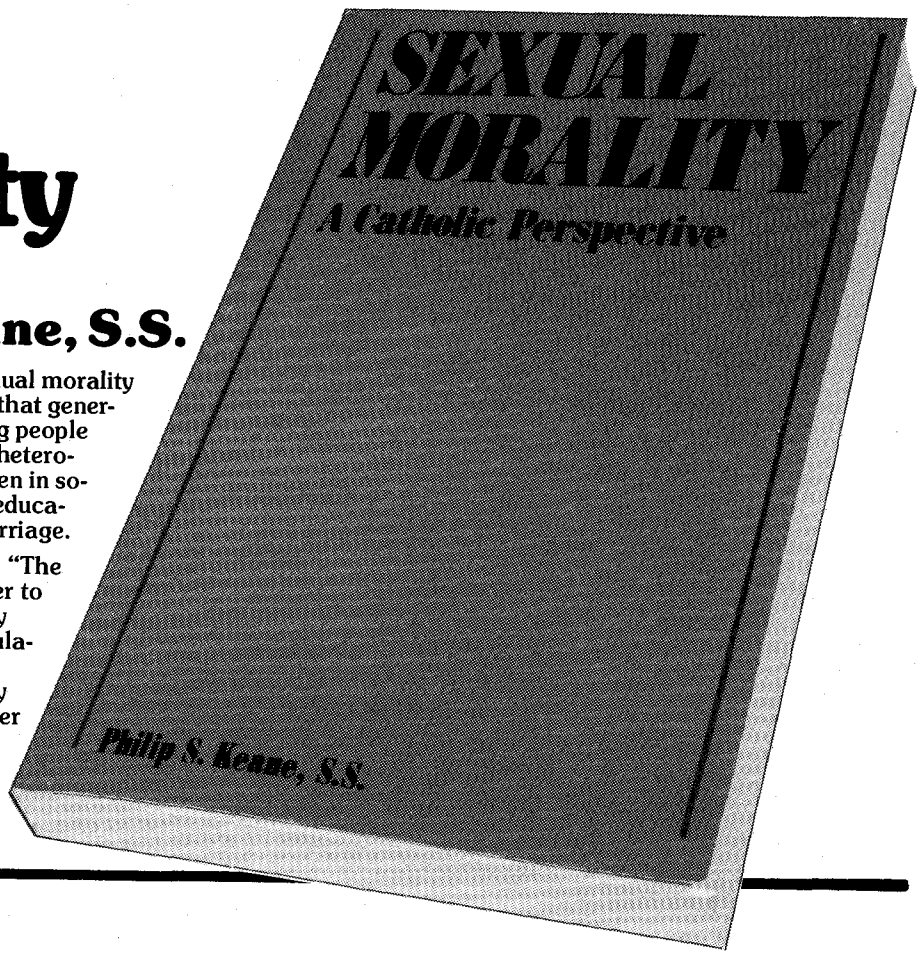

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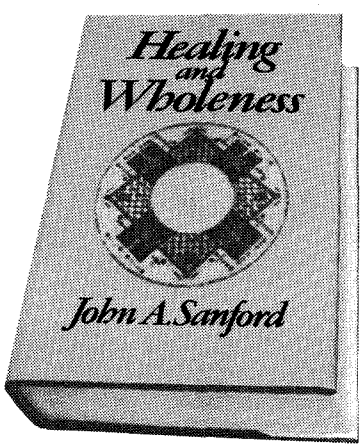

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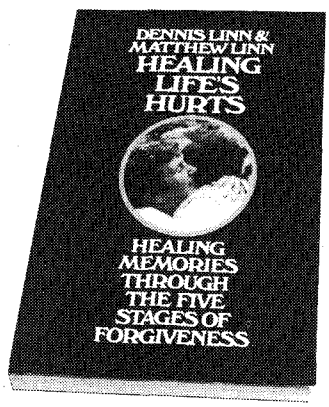

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an advance man or travel arranger during the Carter campaign for the presidency and does the same sort of work on the White House staff. Mrs. Lenke, who lives in Spokane and had volunteered to help with the arrangements for Carter's visit, asked so many knowledgeable questions about Georgia that Lee said to her, "You are from Georgia yourself, aren't you?" She answered that she sure was. She was born and raised in Plains and moved to Spokane after her husband resigned from the Air Force seven years ago. She said that she had known Jimmy and the other Carters and Rosalynn Carter and all the Smiths in Rosalynn's family, too. Mrs. Lenke's sister, a Wiggins by marriage, and others of the Hand family still live in Plains and she goes home fairly often. The presence of two other Lenkes, a daughter aged 19 and a son aged 17, among the many volunteer helpers inspired a false report that several Plains high school students had been brought to Spokane to plug the Carter visit.

The biggest crowd that has turned out for Carter in this country since he became President—believable estimates put it at 60,000 or more—heard him speak in a park that had been developed, partly with federal funds, from a depressed river-front area. At a "town meeting," a contrived occasion that could have been phony but wasn't, 15 of 1700 citizens who had been chosen by lot from 13,000 applicants got chances to ask their President questions. People in the county surrounding Spokane insisted that the meeting, originally restricted to residents of the city, be opened to them and it was. Carter preempted nearly 20 of his 90 minutes with them in opening and closing remarks and many of his answers were excessively long. Many hearers in the park started leaving before he finished and applause at the end was short and tepid. The size of the park crowd and the demand for seats at the meeting constituted evidence of a kind rare in recent Carter experience that he can arouse initial interest and attract people, given favorable circumstances and vigorous advance work. Ruth Lenke said after her work for Carter was done and he had gone that she made her way to him and spoke "very briefly" with him at the town meeting.

Advance work for Carter's domestic trips frequently requires finding a modest home where he can spend the night instead of staying at a hotel. The search can be difficult. One of the recommended families in Denver didn't have room for him and his entourage, however reduced, in a small house. Another home considered for the honor is beside a highway connecting Denver with its main airport. Presidential motorcades, police escorts and related traffic tie up thoroughfares. The memory of a blocked airport highway near Detroit on a previous trip and the resulting complaints caused the Denver scouts to look elsewhere. A Denver lawyer, Leroy Cordover, was deemed to be the perfect host. His calm "okay" when he was asked whether he'd like to put up the President impressed the White House assistant who inquired. "He's cute," she said afterward. Cordover has an attractive young family and he works for a legal services agency dedicated to helping poor people. His father died and the Cordovers had to leave Denver just before Carter arrived. So Carter lodged at the hotel where his staff and the traveling press party stayed.

In Portland, the only other city on the western itinerary where Carter remained overnight, Paul and Janet Olson and their two children, aged five and three, provided ideal accommodation and an ideal setting. Olson, aged 34, sells home insulation, which is an important item in the Carter energy script. He is a friend of the mayor. The Olsons paid $19,000 for a run-down, three-story frame house some years ago and have restored it. "I do hope I'm not disrupting your home," Carter was heard to say to the Olsons when he arrived around 9:30 p.m. The clutter of TV cameramen, microphones, police, police cars, Secret Service agents, firemen, fire engines and demonstrators protesting against nuclear power, neutron bombs and forest spraying gave a pool reporter representing the traveling press a strong impression that Carter's presence was disrupting the Olson home and the neighborhood. The intrusion, including the installation of secure telephones and other presidential apparatus in the Olson house, caused an *Oregon Journal* editorialist to write that "we have absolutely nothing but sympathy for the Olson family." The Olsons took a vacation after Carter and his accompanists departed. Mike Sherwood, a brisk young man who works for the neighborhood improvement and protective association and rents a room in the Olson house, said "that's really funny" when told of a supposition that the Carter visit had been a burden and a nuisance. "Oh, no," he said, "Paul and Janet thought it was a lot of fun." He said Janet Olson, who expects a third child in July, had written in the afternoon *Oregonian* that she and her family enjoyed the whole thing and would do it again if they had the chance.

The prepared text of the first speech on the trip had Carter beginning, "I'm glad to be here—in the sun." As journalists in his party reported with inexhaustible glee, he was forced to say instead that he was glad to be there in the rain. His dedication of the hilltop site where the headquarters of the federal Solar Energy Research Institute is to be built next year occurred on a raw and cloudy afternoon. He announced to some 200 miserable listeners that he'd ordered his energy minions to put together "a national solar strategy." He also proclaimed that his new Department of Energy was shifting $100 million in its 1979 budget to solar and related "renewable resource" projects from other research programs. DOE and White House spokesmen denied sourly and unconvincingly that this was a ploy to forestall bigger appropriations that congressional advocates of enhanced solar development were pushing. It was the first of many federal dispensations,

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announced by Carter in Denver and at subsequent stops, for pollution control, community development and the like. Most of the grants and loans involved had been decided upon long since, some of them had been previously announced, and few if any of them entailed increases in federal expenditure. They were normal bids for political favor, the sort that traveling presidents customarily throw around. But the image of a politician who detests and eschews conventional political trickery that Carter fashioned for himself during his campaigns for nomination and election made this part of the performance seem wrong for him.

The President, practically all of his senior and mid-level assistants, Attorney General Griffin Bell and (at Carter's request) Chief Justice Warren Burger contributed ideas for a speech on law and justice that Carter delivered to the discernibly unappreciative Los Angeles County Bar Association at a celebration of its 100th year. Bell reviewed and approved, with minor changes, a semi-final draft. The advance text was an instant hit with most reporters in the press party. They had been lusting for something solid, something with punch, and this speech was generally thought to be what they wanted. After listening to Carter make it and reading and re-reading a transcript of the delivered version, I agreed with *The New York Times* editorial judgment that it was a piece of "simplistic populism." Nobody could quarrel with Carter's denunciations of the profession's history of resistance to social advance, exorbitant legal fees, the law's avoidable and frequently devised delays and other flaws that outraged Charles Dickens in the 19th century and are still outrageous. Such complaints as "Ninety percent of our lawyers serve ten percent of our people" were absurd. The unserved 90 percent is lucky, I say. Carter's keynote call upon lawyers and others in "our hierarchy of privilege" to "look beyond these comfortable insulations of privilege" sounded fine but was rhetorical pap. He saved his harshest and broadest statement for an early-morning, casual exchange with reporters in Portland:

"There is no doubt in my mind that lawyers care genuinely about their own clients, but quite often when they organize into a bar association the bar association is primarily concerned about the welfare of lawyers and not the welfare of clients. And the same thing applies to other people like medical doctors. I think doctors care very deeply about their patients, but when they organize into the American Medical Association their responsibility is to the welfare of doctors." I can't think of anything to say for the AMA. But the President would have been more presidential if he had shown some awareness that the federal Legal Services Corporation would not be serving the poor today, in ways he applauded and wants to expand, if the American Bar Association had not supported the principle of public legal services when powerful lawyers, members of Congress, Ronald Reagan and the Nixon administration were trying to kill it.

Carter seemed at times to be carried away with some notion of his own that the way to pull himself out of his continuing decline in the polls and manifold troubles with Congress is to strike and strike as if he didn't care about consequences. His rather disjointed assertions at the Spokane town meeting, for example, that "there is an innate racism that exists toward black people within the Soviet Union" and that "a strong sense of religious commitment" among black Africans causes them to "recognize that the Soviet Union is a communist and an atheistic nation" may make superficial sense. What, though, do such statements do for the administration's prolonged and so far failing reach for strategic arms and related agreements with the Soviet government? Nothing, obviously. Carter's nostalgic references during the trip to the time when "I ran for President as an outsider" and "no one knew who I was, no one cared who I was" encouraged me to wonder whether he was consciously trying to change his political style and life and resume his successful campaign posture. One of his senior White House assistants said some such thought may be in the President's mind, "but he has never expressed it to us." His general adviser and press secretary, Jody Powell, said in a conversation after he returned to Washington with the President: "I want to guard against the idea that we think all we have to do is go back and pretend like we're running a campaign and everything will be hunky-dory, which is not the case. That's a day we'll never see again. We had several advantages then that we don't have now. We as incumbents have to deal with the world as it really is to a greater extent than we had to when the President was a candidate."

John Osborne

Cracking the code.

Sourcery

News stories, especially those out of Washington, are written more and more in a kind of code. Take, for example, a recent story written by veteran *Washington Post* diplomatic correspondent Murrey Marder. Marder's stated purpose was to explain the thinking within the Carter administration about "linkage"—that is, the effort to moderate Soviet policy in the Horn of Africa by threatening a tougher American line in the strategic arms limitation talks. Marder said "officials [are] ruefully conceding in private" that American strategy was confused. He said "State Department critics" privately derided national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski's public stress on linkage, which seemingly was backed by President Carter. Then

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Marder attributed a conflicting view of the subject to "a senior State Department official." With the basic rift outlined, Marder moved to the broader subject of presidential leadership and wrote that "senior officials" were increasingly concerned that Carter was not providing consistent direction. And finally Marder presented additional foreign policy views which he attributed variously to "insiders" and "outsiders."

This game of disguising sources in news stories is not confined to diplomatic reportage, although that is where the flowering of code words is most luxuriant. When Godfrey Sperling of *The Christian Science Monitor* wrote recently about Jody Powell's performance as press secretary, he lent considerable weight to the opinions of "one veteran who has held press secretary roles in several administrations." When *Washington Star* reporter Robert Pear assesses the goings-on at city hall, he offers information coming from "District Building observers." Are they city officials, enemies of the mayor or sightseers strolling by?

Well-placed observers (that is to say, the undersigned) believe this system serves the needs of both those who supply the news and the reporters who publish it. Sourcery is a boon to character assassins, bureaucratic infighters, trial balloonists and others with a desire to see information or opinions in print without their names attached. For a reporter it can serve three purposes. One of them—the one defenders of the arrangement emphasize—is to get information and insights that would not be available to readers if the source had to be identified. A guarantee of anonymity, it is argued, encourages candor and discourages meaningless repetition of the official line. A second purpose, less admirable, is to enable the reporter to hide the unreliability or bias of his source, or the inaccuracy of his quotation.

A third purpose is to lend credence or weight to an observation the reporter wishes to pass on to the readers. This is especially odd, when you think about it. What does it add to the credibility of a statement that it comes not from the reporter himself, but from people the reporter considers to be "informed sources?" Where else does a reporter get information? Attaching an observation to an informed but anonymous source is one way of adhering to the hoary convention that reporting is objective and the reporter is not inserting opinions of his or her own. But at this stage in the development of sourcery, the attribution of every declarative statement in a news story to an anonymous source of some type has become almost an empty ritual—or even just a tic—that serves no particular purpose at all.

Sourcery has evolved to its current high level of artistry over a relatively brief period. Traditionally, stiff-backed editors insisted that names be named. There was a presumption that readers were best served that way. Then World War II brought some changes for one segment of news. Two military leaders, who had heavy responsibility for conduct of the war, began briefing reporters on a background basis so they wouldn't scare the public or alert the enemy. The briefings were small, correspondents took no notes and only produced confidential memos for their editors. Gradually, as world events cooled, the backgrounder evolved into what it is today—a forum for officials to share their thoughts with reporters who, in turn, write them with no attribution or with attribution to an unnamed source.

An early practitioner of the art, both as a correspondent for *Newsweek* and later as a State Department adviser, was Ernest K. Lindley. Lindley gave government officials a chance to explain actions or reveal plans to a group of commentators and editorial writers who followed the "Lindley rule"—absolutely no attribution, not even "government sources said." Violators, at least during Lindley's tenure as president of the Overseas Writers' Group, were never invited to another session.

Over the years, variations of the Lindley rule have evolved. There's "background," which generally means the information or observation must be attributed to an anonymous source. "Deep background" means the information may be published but cannot be attributed in any way. "Off-the-record" means this had better not appear in print. The distinctions and subtleties multiply, leading to variations like the mental telepathy technique used by Henry Truitt of *The Baltimore Sun*, a recent past president of the Overseas Writers' Group: "Secretary of State Cyrus Vance is known to believe. . . ."

Only a few years ago *The Washington Post* rather self-righteously refused to attend government briefings where reporters had to agree the information was "on background" and could not be directly attributed to an official. *Post* reporters used to walk out in protest. More recently, however, a study commissioned by the American Newspaper Publishers Association found that 57 percent of the stories in the *Post* and in *The New York Times* had at least one unnamed source. *Post* managing editor Howard Simons had adopted a somewhat cavalier attitude about it all. According to him, "it's easy" to figure out who the unnamed sources are in *Post* stories.

Easy? Well, it's easier once you've cracked the code. It turns out that many reporters think they are com-

Next Week

The Nixon Watch Returns:

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municating valuable information to their readers by the variety of terms they use to describe their anonymous sources. For example we talked to Thomas Ross, former reporter for *The Chicago Sun-Times*, author of a book on the CIA and now assistant secretary of defense for public affairs. After insisting that everything was on background or not-for-attribution unless otherwise specified, Ross offered this insight into Pentagon cryptography. First, there's a big difference between "defense official" and "Pentagon official." The former is a genuine bigwig who is handing down an official line the bosses want out, but don't want attributed to them. In contrast, a "Pentagon official" is someone close to the secretary of defense who is sneaking out information he shouldn't for some reason of his own. Less prestigious is the "Pentagon source," a civilian or low-level type who also is divulging unauthorized stuff.

Fred Hoffman has prowled Pentagon corridors for AP for 17 years. Hoffman has a different system. A tidbit from classified documents is attributed to "intelligence reports" unless he feels more brazen and says "Army intelligence reports." There's a clue to rank in "official" versus "source": the latter is usually a staff person. "Source" may actually be a composite of leakers.

George Wilson, Pentagon reporter for *The Washington Post*, adds another clue for his readers: a "Pentagon official" means someone who literally works in the Pentagon, as opposed to a "defense official," who could be anywhere in the world. This really narrows it down. Wilson also attempts to get his source to say something on-the-record that he can quote elsewhere in the story, as a tip-off.

So now you know how it works.*

A raging ethical controversy in the world of sourcery concerns the propriety of referring to a single person as "sources" or "officials." John Osborne of *The New Republic* incurred the wrath of National Security Council spokesman Jerrold Schecter by violating this condition placed on a briefing by Zbigniew Brzezinski. The plurality system is defended as the only practical way of disguising the identity of a source so eminent. It is condemned as giving the illusion of consensus, and also as being technically deceptive as opposed to merely misleading.

The American Newspaper Publishers Association study suggests that what may play in Washington or New York won't wash in Tampa or Peoria. After examining 5182 news stories, Ohio University journalism professor Hugh Culbertson found that *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* used unnamed sources almost twice as frequently as four smaller metropolitan newspapers, and almost three times as often as six small Ohio dailies. It could be, Culbertson says, that news coming from Washington, and from points around the globe, the kind more frequently reported by the *Times* and *Post*, is more sensitive, and therefore requires indirect attribution. Or it could mean that if you're going to say something in Ohio about Woody Hayes, you better be man enough to stand up and be identified.

Alan Green and Kay Manning

Alan Green and *Kay Manning* are graduate students in the journalism and public affairs program at the American University school of communication.

*TNR's diplomatic correspondent, executive editor Morton Kondracke, contends that the code actually works this way: "defense official" means a civilian, "military official" means a uniformed officer and "Pentagon official" could be either one; status is indicated by the phrase "high-ranking," which attaches to deputy assistant secretaries and above.

President Kaunda comes here ready to invite the Cubans into Zambia.

An Angry Visit

Lusaka, Zambia.

There are few things that President Kenneth Kaunda enjoys more than playing 18 holes of golf on the lovely course he has laid out in the gardens of State House, his residence, where antelopes and peacocks feed on the fairways. He comes in from his afternoon game complaining that the heavy rains have caused his handicap to slip from an average 14 to a disgusting 16—as if, like President Eisenhower, he had no more pressing matters on his mind. But the president of Zambia is no Ike, and there is plenty besides his golf score to trouble him.

The economy of his once-rich copper-producing country is in ruins. This is partly because of the drop in world copper prices, but even more because of the effects of maintaining economic sanctions and closed borders against neighboring Rhodesia, through which lies the easiest and cheapest access to the sea for this landlocked country. Maintaining Kaunda's principles in confronting Ian Smith's rebel regime has cost Zambia more than $500 million in the last 12 years. The effect on living standards and employment has been disastrous, with raging inflation and chronic shortages of once plentiful consumer goods.

None of this is good for Kaunda in a presidential election year. Zambians are heartily fed up with paying what cynics describe as "the price of Kaunda's high principles." The mood in the country is similar to what one sensed in the closing days of President Nasser's regime, where the "Egypt First" movement brought Anwar Sadat to power. Like the Egyptians, many

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Zambians have come to feel that there is a limit to what they ought to be expected to pay for the sake of liberating their neighboring country, especially when their efforts are not sufficiently appreciated by the world community which, they believe, has not done what might be expected to help tide Zambia over its economic difficulties.

Troubled though Kaunda is about his very serious economic and political problems, he is determined not only to stand up to the 'Zambia Firsters' but to intensify his country's support for the Zimbabweans' military struggle against the Smith regime. So far from welcoming the "internal settlement" reached between Smith and some of the black Rhodesian leaders, Kaunda sees this agreement as a serious obstacle to genuine majority rule.

Kaunda is convinced that the only hope for real independence when Rhodesia becomes Zimbabwe lies with the Patriotic Front, which is led by Joshua Nkomo and Robert Mugabe. Kaunda supports both elements of the Front, but his own preference has always been for Nkomo. Nkomo's ZAPU guerrillas enjoy military and other facilities in Zambia, while Mugabe's ZANU forces are all concentrated in Mozambique.

Kaunda remains genuinely committed to the principle of nonalignment. His own humanitarian philosophy—a synthesis of Gandhianism, African socialism and Christianity—is the country's official ideology. In the past these ideas always have inclined him toward making friends in the West rather than in the East. Kaunda is on very good terms with China—which did a massively impressive job in building the railway line between Zambia and Tanzania, providing a new lifeline to the sea; but Zambia's relations with the Soviet bloc always have been uneasy at best and often much worse.

At the height of the crisis in Angola in 1975 Kaunda sent Moscow into paroxysms of rage when he warned Africa that "a tiger and its cubs" were menacing the continent. One of the cubs was Cuba. Now, Kaunda is seriously thinking of inviting the Cubans to send a military force to his country—to help defend his border against incursions from the Rhodesian forces, and actively to assist the Patriotic Front in its battle against the Smith regime. When Kaunda meets President Carter this week, he will present him with a straight option (Kaunda doesn't like to speak of ultimatums): either convince Kaunda that the United States and Britain are serious about removing Smith personally from power, and that they will have no truck with the 'internal settlement'; or else accept the fact that Zambia will engage the support of Cuba.

If Carter asks Kaunda what precisely he expects the US to do to help topple Smith, he is likely to get the same answer that the Zambian leader recently gave to Andrew Young in Lusaka: "I cannot believe that countries which brought down Hitler are helpless when it comes to somebody like Smith." Kaunda will hasten to explain that he is not looking to the Americans and British to send in their troops to Rhodesia; but he does expect that they will, for example, toughen up sanctions by stopping Rhodesia's oil supplies, which come through South Africa, and by leaning harder on the Vorster regime to stop sending in the arms without which the Rhodesian forces could not keep up their military struggle.

Kaunda also will remind Carter that when he reluctantly agreed last September to give his personal support to the Anglo-American plan for Rhodesia, he did so only after he had received specific assurances about the commitment by Washington and London to "remove Smith." Kaunda was the most reluctant to accept the Rhodesia settlement of all five so-called "front-line presidents" (the others are Nyerere of Tanzania, Machel of Mozambique, Neto of Angola and Seretse Khama of Botswana). His reluctance derived from skepticism about the serious intentions of the US and UK to do all they could to bring Smith down. Since that time Kaunda has seen the Americans, and especially the British, qualify their rejection of the "internal settlement"; and he has failed to detect any real evidence that the Western powers intend to remove the Smith regime. That being so, he feels that it is unfair for the Patriotic Front to be deprived of the support of powerful allies who stand ready to commit themselves fully to ensuring the success of their armed struggle. And even though he doesn't admit to it, it would be surprising if Kaunda did not also think that inviting in the Cubans would shorten Zambia's period of sacrifice by ending the long struggle to bring down the Smith regime.

Kaunda has no doubt that if he invites the Cubans in, the "cub" will also bring in the "tiger." Much as he suspects Russian policies in Africa, he now seems to be desperate enough—and sufficiently confident of his own position—to run the risk of any Soviet attempt to exploit the political advantage they would gain from the use of Cuban troops in Zambia.

If asked by Carter about the danger of further internationalizing the conflict in Rhodesia—and, indeed, throughout Southern Africa—Kaunda is likely to reply (as he has done in a number of conversations) that the Rhodesian conflict is already internationalized since the Smith regime is now being kept alive only through the vicarious help it receives from South Africa and from the large force of mercenaries, mainly recruited from Europe and the United States. He appears to believe that against this combination the Patriotic Front cannot win the war by itself; hence the need for Cuban help.

Kaunda's views are not those of his colleagues in the front-line states, except possibly for President Neto of Angola, who is already heavily dependent for his survival on both the Russians and the Cubans. Presidents Nyerere, Machel and Seretse Khama are all

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frankly horrified by Kaunda's new approach. Hitherto, all have been united in wishing to keep all foreign military intervention out of the Rhodesian struggle. Practical fears aside, they insist that the use of foreign troops runs against a fundamental principle of a true national liberation struggle: that it should be fought, for however long, only by the nationals of the countries involved.

However, as one of Kaunda's presidential colleagues put it: "Kenneth Kaunda is deeply angry with the West." He has relied on the Western nations for so long that now in the crunch he feels badly let down. It would be wrong for Carter and his advisers to treat Kaunda's threats too lightly.

Kaunda's policy also has drawn strong criticism from the Mugabe wing of the Patriotic Front—the ZANU forces. They are anti-Moscow, and still rely mainly on the Chinese for the military training in their camps. Since Kaunda is so close to Nkomo, and since only Nkomo's guerrillas are to be found in Zambia, they are naturally suspicious that the Zambian leader's ploy is really a means of helping to strengthen Nkomo in the intra-Front power struggle. Kenneth Kaunda dismisses these suspicions as being entirely unworthy of those who voice them. He can be very obstinate once he has made up his mind—especially if he believes that he is being true to his own principles.

Thus, what happens in the encounter between Kaunda and Carter might well decide the future course of events in Southern Africa. The possibility that the pattern of military intervention we have seen in the Horn of Africa will be repeated in Southern Africa is by no means farfetched.

Colin Legum

Colin Legum is an associate editor of the London *Observer* and editor of the *Africa Contemporary Record.*

Democratic candidates plead,
"Keep him out of my district."

Carter in November

Last October in an editorial about the Carter administration under siege, *TNR* took the witless course of making an election year prediction more than a year before the election. Commenting on the current tendency among Democrats in Congress to take out a little reelection insurance by maintaining a posture independent of an unpopular Democratic president, we said, "Whether or not they wish it so, Jimmy Carter heads the Democratic ticket in 1978, and the condition of his administration will have enormous electoral consequences. At no time in the past generation has the responsibility to govern been so firmly lodged in the hands of one party, and rarely has a party ever faced the potential of losing so much."

Seems safe enough, you say. It's about as well established as any tendency in American politics that the president's party loses seats in the off-year elections—usually not as many in the first term of an incumbent and not so consistently in the Senate as the House. Political scientist Austin Ranney pointed out recently that with only one exception (1934) this tendency has operated in every midterm election since the Civil War. Since 1930, the midterm House loss for the party in the White House has been substantial, averaging 35 seats.

When election time approaches members of Congress become dedicated poll watchers, and in the polls Jimmy Carter is a fright to behold. Both Gallup and Harris show Carter dropping more precipitously than any president in modern times, and despite his Senate victory on the Panama Canal treaties, there still are no signs of bottoming out. In surveys taken around the country for incumbent Democrats, the president is running an average of 20 points behind the Democratic members of Congress in popularity with their constituents. Pollsters and campaign strategists, Republicans and Democrats alike, see it the same way: Jimmy Carter is personally popular, but his job performance ratings have collapsed. "It's the competency factor. People are concerned that he's not up to the job," says Eddie Mahe, who was once the executive director of the Republican National Committee and now aids GOP candidates.

So if the midterm House elections constitute a referendum of sorts on the performance of the president, and if the president is sagging, why is the conventional wisdom around Washington these days just the opposite of the *New Republic* prediction of last October? What you hear most often is that the Republican gains in the House will be nominal (10-15 seats) and the "Carter effect" will be minimal.

The explanation goes like this. First, congressional races don't usually turn on national trends; they tend to be influenced more by local issues and personalities. Also, *party* preferences loom larger in congressional races than in voting for president. Not only are there many more Democrats than Republicans in the country, but the same polls that indicate Carter's slump also show that, as of now, the voters still favor Democrats in House races by a large margin. In other words, there's no automatic transference of the president's unpopularity to the members of Congress from his party.

Another factor is that most House Democrats figure they have a built-in cushion for November. Of the 292 Democratic congressmen elected in 1976, only 22 ran behind Carter and half of those were from the South,

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where Carter's own majorities were highest. More than 200 of the Democratic incumbents won with over 60 percent of the vote. Add to that the perquisites enjoyed by incumbents—staff allowances, franking privileges, patronage positions, research services, use of government-provided TV and radio recording studios and so forth. Among the incumbents who have been most adept at employing these perks for heightened visibility and better constituency service are the 76 sophomore Democrats who were elected from normally Republican districts in the 1974 mid-term revolt against Watergate and Nixon. Two years later, they couldn't be dislodged despite a multi-million dollar Republican investment.

This is why Republicans this year have decided that trying to knock off Democratic incumbents is a poor use of their money: they have decided to spend nearly all their resources on, and expect most of their gains from, the 50 or so vacant seats.

Then there is what's referred to as the "lesson of 1966." That year is memorable for what happened to the batch of freshman Democrats who had been elected on LBJ's coattails in the 1964 landslide. They provided support for the staggering variety of social legislation pushed through the 89th Congress, and they had little choice but to run for reelection as "Great Society Democrats." But by 1966, the tide of President Johnson's popularity had receded considerably, and 47 House Democrats found themselves caught in the off-year undertow.

For an example of how the lesson of 1966 works now, let's take Iowa's sixth district, a largely rural, traditionally Republican district in the state's northwest corner. In 1964, the mayor of Sioux City, Stan Greigg, rode LBJ's coattails to Congress, where he supported the president's programs 94 percent of the time in the first session. Once Greigg strayed, and won himself national notoriety. On the administration's program of rent subsidies for the poor (which to those in northwest Iowa smacked of socialism), Greigg voted no, and LBJ's bill came up a few votes short on the tally board. But with the roll call still open, White House lobbyists contacted Greigg and a handful of others, who changed their votes and enabled rent subsidies to become the law of the land. Well, *The New York Times* told the whole story, and in 1966 Greigg's GOP opponent ran a television commercial of himself simply reading the *Times* article—to devastating effect. Too much LBJ. So long, Greigg.

In the Watergate referendum 10 years later, the Democrats recaptured Iowa's sixth in the person of affable, self-made fishing-tackle millionaire Berkley Bedell. Bedell became a case study of how to use every congressional perk available to prepare for reelection, which he won in 1976, running 22 points ahead of Jimmy Carter. Even thus insulated, Bedell supported the president only 65 percent of the time during the first session of Congress. Berkley Bedell is in fine electoral shape for 1978, but he reflects the current mood among Capitol Hill Democrats, summed up by one—not Bedell—in the following terms: "The president can still recover, but right now he's in trouble. He's well-meaning, but also inept. And it's deep. You get it from all over the country. Still, there's no great tide like the anti-Nixon thing in 1974. I'll be alright if I can put some distance between myself and Carter—and keep him out of the district."

Despite the current conventional wisdom, nobody around Washington is offering better than even money that the Republicans *won't* pick up a windfall of House seats in November, and there are some interesting straws in the wind on that side of the argument as well.

For one thing, surveys in recent years have shown consistently that while the people give Congress very low marks as an institution—only 12 percent of the public reports high confidence today—they tend to approve the job their own representative is doing. But in the latest Lou Harris survey, that anomaly has turned around rather sharply and now, by 43-39 percent, a plurality now gives their own representative a negative performance rating. Reporting those results to a Senate subcommittee, Harris said that voters are finally catching on to the fact that their own congressman shares the sins of the institution. Harris also noted that because there are twice as many House Democrats running for reelection this year, the negative reaction could hurt the Democrats twice as much as the Republicans.

With Panama, the Horn of Africa, the Middle East and SALT II all heated up to one degree or another, for a time Republicans hoped that the foreign and defense policy cluster might dominate the 1978 elections—to their advantage, because on those issues Republicans generally do well. But it's now almost certain that the economy—inflation in particular—is paramount in the voters' minds, and on this matter Democrats normally enjoy greater public confidence. But not Jimmy Carter. Today Carter gets his very lowest marks—72 percent negative—on his handling of the economy. If that rating begins to carry over to his co-partisans in Congress—as well it might since theirs are the only names on the ballot this fall—look for a bigger swing to the GOP.

After his trip through the West last week, Carter was bullish on the idea of getting out for even more campaigning. Where goes the president, so go the TV cameras, so a sure way to heighten Carter's impact on 1978—one way or the other—would be to step up the speaking schedule. The White House claims it already has more invitations than can be accommodated, *and* that no one has asked the president to stay away. But that is a message more subtly sent, and there are places where Jimmy Carter on the hustings will surely compound the difficulties of local Democrats. In the West, for example, Carter's water and public lands

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policies are vastly unpopular and the feeling prevails that the president just has no understanding of the region. In the Southwest, Carter's flip-flop on gas deregulation left his Democratic supporters embarrassed and vulnerable. In the Midwest, grain state Democrats have sent obvious signals that they'd rather campaign alone, if you please. Even in his native South, pockets of resistance are developing. In North Carolina, for example, tobacco is the issue and with HEW's anti-smoking crusade in full sway, Joe Califano's boss might get a cool welcome.

In places where specific aspects of the president's policies are provoking opposition, there may indeed be some tendency for it to rub off on other Democrats. As an instance, for over four years, Iowa Senator Dick Clark has been sitting comfortably on approval ratings in the mid-70s. Among Iowa farmers, the farmer from Plains, Georgia, who went to the White House also began well, with ratings in the mid-80s. But Mr. Carter's agriculture policies are now very unpopular in Iowa, and beginning last April, the president's ratings began to slide, from 85 percent to 56 percent in August, down to just 32 percent approval in March of this year. Senator Clark's ratings were lockstep with Carter's, dropping from 75 percent to 68 percent in August and now down to 45 percent. Dick Clark isn't responsible for the administration's agricultural policy, but in the polls, he and the president are falling together like two men in a sack race. And Clark, who faces a potentially tough reelection contest this fall, is beginning to put a little distance between himself and Mr. Carter on the matter of farm policy.

Speaking of the president's increased campaign schedule, one of his inner circle of Georgians said, "We want to get back to our winning game." A part of that game that worked so well in 1976 was inveighing against the Washington establishment and the well-placed in general. Returning to that theme on the western swing, Mr. Carter singled out some privileged totums, doctors and lawyers, and inveighed away, employing the outsider rhetoric he plyed so effectively in the '76 campaign.

But Carter is now very much part of the establishment, and now it goes over not so well. Besides, back in Washington the president seems to have an almost irrepressible tendency to campaign against Congress too—in an oblique manner, to be sure, but with scant notice that most of its members, and all of the really powerful ones, are his own partisans. When the stand-by gas and gas-guzzler taxes were killed in the House, you recall, Carter accused the Congress of caving in to the oil and automobile industries. He returned to the same theme earlier this month, condemning congressional reluctance over his Middle East arms sales package and the powerful lobbies "who induce Congress" to write loopholes in the tax code for the powerful and influential. Well, just who are the tools of the auto and oil industries? And who writes those loopholes, after all? If Jimmy Carter takes that show on the road, some of the Republicans who face those well-insulated Democratic incumbents may find that the Democratic president is doing some of their work for them.

Ken Bode

Running against himself—
and winning.

Carter in 1980

When I said in conversation the other evening that I thought Jimmy Carter would sweep the country in 1980, I was surprised that a much more experienced observer said he thought that I was right. Of course it is not the kind of prediction one expects will be recalled if it turns out to be wrong, but is intended primarily to underline my belief that the current criticisms of Carter are in danger of obscuring his actual situation. I have made my own criticisms of him, and I do not now withdraw them. I am merely saying that the spate of criticism in recent months has often been exaggerated and misdirected, and that it is worth standing back and considering the man and his prospects more clearly.

I am not interested in suggesting any "scenario" for 1980. The most popular one making the rounds in Washington just now is that Jerry Brown will challenge Carter in the early primaries, that he will make a dent in the support for the president but that his own weakness will then be revealed, and that this will be the signal for Edward Kennedy to recross his bridges and claim the presidency once more for the dynasty that has a title to it. All of this is plausible enough if one likes dreaming up scenarios. But it is far too "iffy," as FDR used to say when presented with such speculations, to arouse more than curiosity. As Tom Wicker has pointed out, Brown might draw not only Kennedy into the race, but a whole pack of Democratic aspirants. Carter could then play FDR's old game—divide and conquer—which Carter in fact played skillfully all through 1976.

Instead of scenarios of the future, let us look at Carter as he is now. Sixteen months after he took office, we should have formed some picture of him. One of the difficulties we are all having is that he is exactly what he promised to be. I supported him during his campaign, because I presumed that he was lying. But it turns out that in his heart he meant what he said. He promised to be the most efficient weak president of the century, and now indomitably plays the part of a weak president; he clamorously ran against Washington, and now governs against Washington. I distrust both these postures, but their appeal still is

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strong. After putting up with minimal art, we now have the minimal president, and we cannot take the measure of him. But we underestimate how positive his negative image may be. He need simply run against himself in 1980, the president *vs.* the presidency, Jimmy Carter *vs.* President Carter, and how can he not be the winner?

"ELECT JIMMY CARTER: YOUR LAST PRESIDENT." What a slogan! Why should he not ask for four more years in order to complete the task of dismantling the presidency? I am not being facetious in this. The man is uncannily in tune with the times. As the people are torn between the desire to be governed, when it suits their interests, and the yearning to be governed as little as possible, so is he genuinely torn on the question. The contradictions and ambivalences in his utterances have their root, not in an incapacity to talk straight, but in a deep and perhaps even ineradicable conflict within himself about the proper role and limits of government. The revival of his earlier attacks on lawyers and doctors during his recent trip to the West was not just an expression of simplistic populism, as *The New York Times* put it, but a reflection of the tension in populism between a desire to curb the greed of special interests and a permanent suspicion of the role of the government in doing so. The lawyers and doctors can be attacked, told to counsel and heal themselves, and the government can be told to do nothing about it.

From Carter's own point of view these speeches could not have been more directly on target, appearing to lead on matters of widespread concern to the public, but without any need to disturb himself or anyone else by acting. All of this is not unrelated to another fact about him: that he is as likable or unlikable to people as he was in the campaign. No one seems really to have changed his or her opinion about him. The image is as blurred as ever, which is puzzling to some, but is not as disturbing as it seems. Here is a president whom the Americans are not required to admire or like, and yet one who is no threat to them or the Constitution or apple pie or motherhood. This is a powerful position to be in. "DISLIKE YOUR PRESIDENT: VOTE FOR CARTER": especially in the post-Watergate mood, this could be a novel and winning slogan. The Americans have been taught that it is their duty to give scant respect to their presidents, and Carter seems therefore to fit the bill perfectly, without them having to worry that he will do much to injure them or indeed to affect them at all. It would be very irksome to feel one should be fair to a president.

This again is not facetious. It is not enough to say, as even his severest critics are willing to do, that he is governing with a Congress that is even more out of hand than usual—"independent" or "conservative," according to how one looks at it; and that he is governing also in face of a public mood that is incoherent, not only in its desire to be governed and yet not governed, but in its desire for the United States to be strong but never to use its strength. The fact is that Carter straddles these contradictions in himself, and the blurred image may in time prove to be an advantage. He stands where the majority of the people now stand: everywhere and nowhere. Just as he does not have to be liked, he does not have to be supported—until again he plays on the incoherence of the public mood, able this time to present the incoherence of his presidency as his own deliberate statesmanship. If he can get through to 1980 without any disaster, the question whether he is liked or trusted will be of small consequence.

It should not be overlooked that the incoherence of his presidency so far has left him with maneuverability, the most precious of political assets, which he can use both during the remainder of his term and then in the campaign for renomination and reelection. There is very little ground in any direction Carter cannot move to occupy, and his trip to the West ought to be a reminder of his willingness to do so. He went there bearing gifts he previously had refused. He earned from Governor Richard Lamm of Colorado the not unfriendly comment that in the West they believe in the possibilities of redemption. He was given rousing receptions by crowds and stirred them with speeches that also made the headlines, and he breathed fire against Russia without laying down any policy. He will be a formidable campaigner as an incumbent president, even if the incumbency no longer seems as important a factor as in the past.

In some respects Carter reminds one of Bagehot's definition of a constitutional statesman as a man of common opinions but uncommon abilities. What confuses us is that at a time when the common opinions of the country are so disparate and even feckless, he has an uncommon ability to adopt them in his own attitudes toward public policy. What has been called Carter's "marvelous capacity to rationalize inconsistencies" may well be what the country wants today. One of his aides has said that "The country is in a leave-me-alone mood" just now, and there is a kind of "live-and-let-live" attitude in Carter's juggling of the conflicting interests and wants that such a mood produces. What one ought not to underestimate is his ability, as he turns from this year's elections to 1980, to pull these together into a convincing picture of what he has done, and what in his second term he intends to do, rationalizing the public's as well as his own inconsistencies.

Clark Clifford is reported to have said at the meeting of Washington insiders called for Carter's benefit by Robert Strauss: "The question has always been whether a president without federal experience and a staff without executive experience can govern the country. After 15 months the answer is clearly 'no.'" Whether his judgment was quite as strong as that—he has denied that it was—is beside the point in the context of my argument here. However it may seem to damage him now, it is something of an achievement for

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a president to retain the image of an outsider, and one which he may again turn to his advantage. There is some evidence that he and his staff are ceasing to say, "This is just the way it was in Georgia," and that they are shedding what Mark Siegel has called "their bias against the political process," which from the beginning has been at the root of all their troubles. But what seems likely to happen is that, while becoming more adept at Washington politics, Carter will still seem to be a Washington outsider. Such a combination would be formidable. The ground of both Kennedy and Brown would be preempted.

My concern here has not been with Carter's policies, not to defend or criticize him or them, not to suggest that he is leader or statesman. I have been concerned merely with the political ground on which he now stands as a future candidate, and have tried to show that this ground is a great deal firmer than many of us have been saying. His personal and political resources are not slight, and he has the time to take full advantage of them before 1980. Even while criticizing him, Clifford said that of all the presidents he had known none had impressed him more than Carter for intelligence and competence. Other Carter critics say the same. It is generally agreed that there is still a lot of personal goodwill toward him in the country, more than one would expect from either the Washington journalists or the public opinion polls. He seems at last to have been jolted into seeking advice from a larger and more varied group of people, and paying attention to it. But most important of all is this too often obscured fact that he seems to think and feel and speak and act very much in the mood of the country. By 1980 he could weld all the real and apparent inconsistencies into a political personality that will dominate the scene.

For the time being there is something to be said for treating Carter and his administration as men with the untapped political strength to act with more resourcefulness and even more success than so far. Who knows, they might. It is not very sensible to reinforce Carter's own inclination to a weak presidency by making him seem weaker than he is.

Henry Fairlie

An exclusive interview with the secretary of symbolism.

The Man Behind the Cardigan

by Garry Trudeau

Note: in the late spring of 1960, the Spanish poet J. E. Cirlot sent an open letter to the editor of the Paris Review. *"The error of symbolist artists and writers," he wrote, "has always been precisely this: that they sought to turn the entire sphere of reality into a vehicle for impalpable correspondences."*

Since that time a wide variety of essayists and symbolist journeymen have, through word and deed, taken Cirlot's indelicate observation to heart, but none has more thoroughly engaged popular attention than Duane P. Delacourt, current secretary of symbolism. It has only been a year since Delacourt first burst into public view, but in that time, the lanky southerner has presided over an ever-widening array of symbolic activity that has included the Fireside Chat, the Inaugural Stroll, the last two presidential trips abroad, and, most exquisitely, the Annual Human Rights Awards Banquets. Personally involved in the selection of everything from cardigan fabrics to overseas monuments, the new secretary has orchestrated the most felicitous revue of "impalpable correspondences" in the history of symbolist theory.

How, in his own estimation, had it all fared? On the eve of his first anniversary with the Carter administration, I met with Delacourt in his cramped office on the third floor of the Executive Office Building for a comprehensive mood check.

TNR: Mr. Secretary, perhaps we should begin with a general overview. Where essentially do we stand right now? Are people really as receptive to symbols as they once were?

DD: Well, as you know, much debate within the symbolist community centers around just that question. If you'll grant me, for argument's sake, the definition of symbolism as the simple art of thinking in images, then very possibly it is an art now lost to civilized man. And if responsibility is to be spooned out, I think you'll find that Descartes and his ubiquitous disciples can be properly credited with the general atrophy of formal symbolism. Now having said that, I

Garry Trudeau is the creator of *Doonesbury*.

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will also concede that there are a number of well-meaning social engineers who think this is a splendid development, but practitioners of symbolist theory—and there are more of us than you might think—can't help but feel a little saddened.

Of course, some people never let go. Two days before the election, I gave Jimmy copies of Fromm's *The Forgotten Language* and Bayley's *The Lost Language of Symbolism* to read before he composed his victory speech. Neither of the works is quite as strident as it sounds, but the governor found them both alarming enough to order a security check on the authors and a formal rebuttal from Pat Caddell. Now, Pat is a very nice young man, and a perfectly competent opinionist, but his knowledge of applied philosophy doesn't extend beyond fortune cookies. Nonetheless, he was quick to recognize that the two books cast grave doubts on the wisdom of his beloved style-over-substance manifesto, and so he lost no time in denouncing them both. I found the whole incident quite baffling; it seemed to me so basic that other voices should be heard in the Carter camp, especially since both were easily available in paperback.

TNR: But since you knew that the president was planning on creating a Department of Symbolism, weren't you in effect undercutting yourself by submitting the books?

DD: Not at all. If I was going to be involved in something as conceptual as a Department of Symbolism, I had to make sure I was on firm ground intellectually. There are a lot of budding nihilists around the Senate committee rooms, and I was determined not to go up on the Hill and be manhandled by some hot dog two years out of Brandeis. Also, the program had to have a certain integrity if it was going to withstand the rigors of 20th-century situational thinking. It's all very fine if you're a medieval Florentine prince and you're dispensing the kind of heavy-handed church-and-state iconography that people are willing to die for, but symbology is much more complicated now, precisely because of its tenuous nature. Carter was convinced that our safety lay in our indisputable honesty, and that we should concede from the onset—both on the record and off—that symbols *are* in a state of constant flux and evolution. I once wrote a position paper on the apple pie motif for the Nixon administration.

TNR: For *whom?*

DD: I was doing think-tank freelancing out of New York. The apple pie was coming under a lot of fire in those days, and the domestic council ordered a study. It was an intriguing question: here you had one of the most durable symbols in American folklore, and suddenly, after prospering for 200 years, it's in trouble, just floundering in a sea of disrepute. Why? Well, after considerable trial and error, I was finally able to trace it to the Marshall Plan, when a new global awareness first began to erode our traditions of indigenous imagery. By Vietnam, suspicions had given way to open derision, and apple pie—and by extension, motherhood—gradually became the objects of unprecedented scorn.

TNR: But it's the same apple pie it always was, isn't it, Duane?

DD: Of course. And that's the shame of it. Our traditional inventory has been seriously compromised.

TNR: But what of your own source material? Many of your symbols were old standards; the cardigan, the tree house, the stroll, the phonathon . . .

DD: Well, that's not quite accurate. All of those grew out of a tradition of regionalism. They had never been tried on a national scale. Has any American ever taken up arms for a cardigan sweater? No, these were relative newcomers as symbols go. The interesting thing is that they were never intended to be the iconographic focus of the administration. They were only deployed for the short gain, to get people involved. You may not believe this, but Carter really meant it when he said that he wanted to make government as good and decent and caring as the American people.

TNR: But if I may interrupt, Mr. Secretary, isn't the whole reason we have government in the first place because people are *not* inherently good and decent and caring?

DD: Well, I'm not going to get into any shoving matches with you over the imperfectibility of man. The point is that Jimmy identified something in the American people that belied all the cynicism and mistrust of the previous 20 years. He saw a people hungry to be led. But even freshly mandated, a leader needs access to his people if he is to lead. Some presidents have turned to activism. Jimmy Carter turned to symbolism. What you people failed to understand was that it was never meant to be more than a means to an end, a way for the president to restore proper trust and faith before he turned to the country for the sorts of sacrifices his future programs would require.

TNR: It's true that we haven't seen so much of the early symbols in recent months.

DD: And do I look like I'm out of a job? No way. Like Midge Costanza, I'm just beginning. I think the president explained it best the morning after the election. We were in Plains, out on Lillian's front porch, when Jimmy suddenly turned to me and Rosalynn, and said, "In the symbol, the particular represents the general, *not* as a dream, *not* as a shadow, but as a living and momentary revelation of the inscrutable." He was quoting Goethe, of course, but the sentiment was pure Carter.

TNR: What did Rosalynn say?

DD: Nothing. She didn't have to. She just took Jimmy's hand and gently squeezed it. The stone in her engagement ring, a symbol of conjunction, caught the sun. The exquisiteness of the moment was not lost on me.

TNR: Evidently not. Indeed, I imagine it carried the day.

DD: No, no, it was just a flash and then it was gone. I am not, as you might imagine, in a constant state of frenzy

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over all that is gestural. As you may know, my formal training is not even in symbolism. For years, I toiled in the vineyards of metaphysics.

TNR: You started your career as a metaphysicist?

DD: Cosmologist, to be precise. For six years I thought and wrote about physical systems. My doctoral thesis was entitled "The Universe: A Theoretical Blueprint." In my day, I was thought to be quite dangerous.

TNR: Is that how you hooked up with Carter? Did he see the paper published?

DD: As a matter of fact he did, but we didn't meet until several years later. Actually, the first person to give me a job was John Lindsay. I met him at a Future Shock symposium in New Haven just after his first election. By that time, I'd had my fill of metaphysics, so when he offered me a position as a symbolist in his administration, I leapt at it like a cubist in heat.

TNR: May we assume that the shirt-sleeves through Harlem was one of your early efforts?

DD: No, no I had nothing to do with that. My duties were a little more circumscribed. In fact, for the first nine months my only serious responsibility was to read Jimmy Breslin. Every night at 11:45, the Night Owl edition of the *News* was delivered to my office. Breslin's article was always page three, and it invariably focused on the plethora of bureaucratic indignities visited upon some long-suffering Hispanic mother of twelve trying to make ends meet in "the city they call New York." My responsibility was to see to it that the city had atoned for its various failings by the time the mayor's switchboard was opened at nine. I woke plumbers up at three in the morning, roused building inspectors from their beds, called negligent landlords, dispatched electricians to fix exposed wiring, sent engineers into the sewers, health officials through snowstorms to scrape down peeling, lead-based paint, and more than once hand-delivered welfare checks to the disabled occupants of some seven story walk-up. Because it all took place under the cover of darkness, the mayor called it Fairy Godmother Duty, and it absolutely confounded Breslin. As far as he was concerned, the city was coopting *his* "little people," turning their individual miseries to its own advantage. He started going further and further out of town to find his indigents. When he finally started signing off his columns with lines like, "Yes, life is hell when nobody cares in the county they call Suffolk," we knew we'd won.

TNR: Tell us about some of your other symbolist projects for Lindsay.

DD: Well, the Big Apple was one of mine.

TNR: That was a great triumph.

DD: Yes, but I had my off days just like anyone else. I once advised the mayor to send his children to exclusive boarding schools as a protest against the pitifully under-funded public school system. It was a terrible misjudgment, but I learned from it. Very few people are unaware of where Amy Carter now attends school.

TNR: How does developing symbols for Carter compare with developing them for Lindsay?

DD: Quite favorably. Carter's overall symbology is busier, more textured and concerned with detail, but that's because his vision is that much more complicated. Ironically, the smallest symbols—the cardigan, the chat, or the stroll—inspire the most faith. If a citizen sees that the president of the United States dresses, talks, and ambulates just like everyone else, then he's more likely to trust him to do a good job with the SALT talks. For the average American, it is tantamount to believing in himself. Of course, you can take it too far; Barry Jagoda, Carter's television adviser, once requested air time to show the president putting his trousers on one leg at a time.

TNR: You spoke a moment ago of vision. One complaint heard often is that after more than a year in office, the president has yet to articulate a clear vision for the future of this country. How do you respond to that?

DD: Patiently, but with just a trace of irritation. Nothing could be more unfair. Jimmy Carter has done more to identify this nation's options than any president in recent years. His is a dream of a nation with priorities, a proud, free society, where a man can turn to his neighbor and say, "We are a nation without unnecessary water projects." And the Carter record doesn't stop there. In little over a year, Carter has bound the nation's Vietnam wounds . . .

TNR: I thought President Ford bound our Vietnam wounds.

DD: No, he bound our Watergate wounds. Vietnam was quite beyond Ford's reach or understanding. Unlike Carter, Ford was never able to look beyond the East-West competition, the strategic confrontation of a bi-polar world. Partly because Dr. Kissinger was always at his elbow, he completely failed to note the interaction of the four distinctly different worlds that have emerged in the last 30 years. All four of them interact in very fluid combinations, depending on the issues. The Carter foreign policy recognizes this and respects the fact that there is a redistribution of global power, that there are non-aligned as well as aligned countries which are regionally or internationally influential. This is the reasoning behind the president's recent trips. For instance, as Zbiggy has repeatedly pointed out, it is difficult to speak of the distribution of global power without mentioning Venezuela. It is impossible not to mention Brazil. It is unthinkable not to evoke India.

TNR: Has he tried?

DD: Yes, but his face gets all puffy and red and he ends up holding a press conference. Zbig is basically a big picture man, so we generally prefer to keep him under wraps as much as possible. In fairness to him, though, it should be pointed out that he was enormously helpful during the symbolism plenary sessions before both trips.

TNR: The Carter trips have been called, among other things, masterpieces of symbolism, haven't they?

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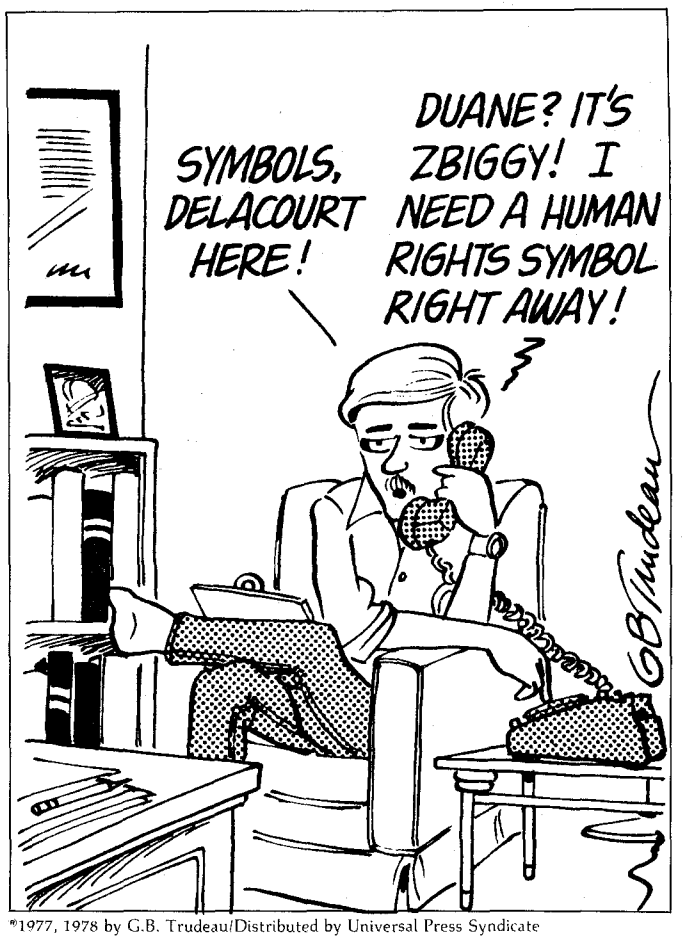

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DD: Well, they were to the extent that all state visits are. That originally gave Jimmy some problems, as he didn't want the world community to think that he was just using the host countries for their symbols. In fact, it bothered him so much that he seriously considered staying in one country, France, say, for six weeks, traveling about, staying with French citizens in their homes, getting to know the people on a personal basis, to show he really cared about the French and their problems, not just their symbols. He only abandoned the idea when he began to worry that people might think he was on vacation.

TNR: Mr. Secretary, which countries would you say worked out the best for you personally?

DD: Well, Poland obviously, but that was partially because of our strategy of reverse symbolism, originally suggested to us by the staff theoretician for the Trilateral Commission. What I was faced with was the necessity of undoing all the ill will that had been generated by the Nixon visit in 1971. You may recall that right after Dwight Chapin's in-flight admonishment to the press to refrain from Polish jokes while in Poland, the Polish tarmac jockeys wheeled the landing ramp up to the wrong side of Air Force One. By the time they discovered their error and Nixon finally emerged, half the press corps was in uncontrollable hysterics. It was a moment of enormous embarrassment to the Poles, forcing Nixon to cut his losses and depart while the ramp was still in place. Well, after a gaffe like that, Jimmy could not very well go to Poland without making some sort of unilateral gesture that would represent a comparable loss of face. So we dreamt up the incompetent translator ploy, and it worked like a dream.

TNR: And then some. What other successes did you log that trip?

DD: I'd say that India was a triumph.

TNR: But the newspapers reported that feelings between Desai and Carter left something to be desired, that their talks were . . .

DD: Cold and blunt. Yes, I know. Look, the man's an ascetic, a spiritual leader, and while Jimmy can certainly hold his own on that level, he understandably was put off by all the urine stories. Desai's a queer bird, no doubt about it. But in spite of his eccentricities, he and Carter really did get along quite well. I think the visit brought them much closer.

TNR: But Carter called him "a close personal friend" before they'd even met. Isn't that hard to improve on?

DD: On the contrary. We're talking semantics here. When the president calls somebody "a close personal friend," regardless of whether they've actually met or not, he means it in a Christian sense. He means that he regards that person as his brother.

TNR: We wondered about that. It seemed he called every leader he talked with a close personal friend. Even Poland's Gierek, with whom he spent only 20 minutes in discussion. After you take away the time needed for translation, that's less than some people spend with a wrong number.

DD: Well, what you have to understand is that the president connects with his peers very easily. Take Giscard. The symbology in France was unavoidably distasteful. The Arc de Triomphe and Normandy Beach signified the transition from past glories to the present interdependencies. That's pretty rough on a country's national pride. But the chemistry between the two was so good that Giscard didn't even flinch when Jimmy announced in his departure speech that "Yesterday was one of the best years of my life."

TNR: I guess what I mean to raise here is the possibility that even in "close, personal" friendships, the president is striving for effect and not substance. I think you'll agree that this problem is at the very core of what has long concerned people about Carter's use of symbols. The question we keep coming back to, Mr. Secretary, is what essentially is the difference between your broad, comprehensive program of symbolism and a simple case of overheated public relations?

DD: I'm afraid I don't understand the question.

TNR: Let me restate it. What I . . .

DD: You know, I'd hate to think you hadn't been listening all this time, *New Republic*. I'm sorry to leave you unsatisfied as to the legitimacy of our symbol package, but I know no better words to describe what we have been trying to do. But then, what are words themselves if not . . .

TNR: Yes, sir. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

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Arts and Lives

Stanley Kauffmann on films

Onward to the Past!

Sylvester Stallone is the youngest old-timer around. He wants to make *movies*. He showed it in *Rocky* and he shows it again here in *F.I.S.T.* (United Artists). You can have film (he seems to say), you can have cinema and the seventh art and the medium of our times, just let me make them the way they used to.

In point of fact, of course, they've never *stopped* making them that way—look at what the Walt Disney Studios have continued to make money with, while New Wave after New Wave has been plashing on the beach. But Stallone is a forceful young man bursting onto the scene with the impact of youthful change, and all that's on his mind is bowling 'em right down the middle of the most reliable alleys.

Rocky was the oldest story in the world, fundamentally, and it was treated that way (except for the sex which, though not explicit, was conceded to exist). It was a stratospheric success. This may also happen to his new picture—a two-and-a-half-hour chronicle of the rise of a labor boss, from worker to organizer to leader to international czar, a down-the-decades epic of the sort that Edward G. Robinson and Walter Huston and Edward Arnold used to journey through in the '30s and '40s. The stalwart stiff-necked honest young immigrant laborer; his ultra-clean teasing clumsy romance with an immigrant factory-working girl; the union struggle that begins in utter honesty; the boyhood chum who keeps straight when the hero paddles in muddy waters (Are you listening, Pat O. and Jimmy C.?); the marriage and the children, the accelerating success, the graying temples, the eventual haunting by the youthful missteps to topple him when he's at the top—all there, all treated with the enthusiasm of those who really believe that the only way to make a good new picture is to make a good old picture. Only one substantial difference: the tragic flaw, instead of being the hero's as it used to be, is now society's. (The picture's explicit motto is: "Nothing's clean.") I felt as if I were having a long and comfy visit with an old friend who had got a slight facelift and a new wardrobe.

The original story is by Joe Eszterhas, a Hungarian-born reporter in Cleveland, which is where the story is mostly set. He wrote a screenplay which, according to published reports, was rewritten by Stallone, not entirely to Eszterhas's delight. Whoever did what, the effect is much the same as in *Rocky*—the materials of naturalism exploited for romance. What's amusing now is to see some of the critical brethren who are hierophants of the High Hollywood days complaining about *F.I.S.T.* because it *is* romance, because it fiddles fictitiously with its subject, uses stereotypical characters, contrives plot, and arbitrates an ending. Apparently what was not only permissible but holy in 1938 is sin in 1978, even among those who mourn the changes of time.

The picture declares itself before it actually begins, with the goo-goo colorings of Laszlo Kovacs's camera under the credits. (The hero's name, coincidentally, is Kovak.) And it never betrays us by getting genuinely serious. It always conducts itself in the best-seller vein of the pop *roman à clef*, the unspoken name here being Hoffa. The music by Bill Conti is absolutely right. It's conventional movie music: manly melancholy horn passages under manly partings of friends, tinklings under romance. For all its length and its complexities of décor, *F.I.S.T.* is unpretentiously out to entertain.

And it does, mainly because of Stallone's performance. He has the quintessential of star quality: when he is on, you look. And you listen. In one (repeat *one*) respect he suggests Brando: his exceptionally strong body is a metaphor of his personality, strong and commanding. Insofar as this role calls for complexities, and it isn't exactly *Richard II*, Stallone gives it all it needs, in moral qualm, resolution, affection. Early in the story when the young hero takes over a union meeting and incites the men to strike with the cry of "Fist" (an acronym for Federation of Interstate Truckers), the eloquence is not in his rhetoric but in his being. He speaks to the men in *their* language, and I never doubted their response.

The director, Norman Jewison, has helped a lot by making the most of Stallone's hulking power, by the dramatic use of space (for instance, streets as battlefields outside factory gates), by building mosaics of supportive faces at meetings and picketings. Once in a while Jewison's direction suggests—though it's a great way from—the second best film I know on the subject of workers' struggles, Mario Monicelli's *The Organizer* (the best being Eisenstein's *Strike*); and for a picture even to remind one of Monicelli's masterpiece is compliment enough. The editor, Tony Gibbs, who did *Tom Jones* among many others, has kept things crisp, and in collaboration with the director has even included

Films Worth Seeing

Close Encounters of the Third Kind. Out of briefly stunning film effects, a briefly stunning faith. It even works a second time.

The Goodbye Girl. Neil Simon's best-knit script—for film *or* stage. Herbert Ross directs as cleverly as he did Simon on Broadway.

F.I.S.T. An old-time melodrama, made today, about racketeers—labor thugs instead of rum-runners. Sylvester Stallone is better than in *Rocky*.

A Woman of Paris. Charles Chaplin is not (or hardly) in this 1923 attempt at sexual candor that he directed with some wizardry. Hokey story, but Adolphe Menjou is a diamond.

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a couple of swish pans. (The device that punctuates the famous sequence of breakfasts in *Citizen Kane*.) I can't remember the last time I saw a swish pan. They help to make the whole thing old-timey.

The casting varies from stock to weak to imaginative. You know the moment that you see Peter Boyle, as a senior union officer, that he's going to be rough and shifty; or Rod Steiger, as a senator, that he is going to come on honest enough to make you cringe. Kevin Conway, well known and increasingly good in the theater, supplies solid stuff as Stallone's boyhood pal who goes crooked; but David Huffman as the boyhood pal who stays straight is weak. Tony Lo Bianco, a Mafia *capo*, is a quiet crazy snake. The best acting in the film other than the star's, sure to go uncelebrated, is by Melinda Dillon as the girl he marries. Dillon was the bland "other woman" in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. Here she gets exactly the right transformations—even, seemingly, in her ankles—to present a prim but proud, attractively attracted Lithuanian girl. She and Stallone remind us warmly—one more atavism!—that many '30s films dealt with young immigrants.

There's one more interesting aspect of the picture, probably the most important. Stallone had made a smash with his first film, a movie-movie, and was looking for another subject. What did he pick for such a film—the next vehicle for himself, to maintain his popularity and satisfy the *Rocky* audience? The life story of a gradually compromised labor leader. This connotes at least two matters. The idea of union struggle as heroic agony is no longer part of the emotional composition of the union member. There must be millions of such members in the audience and the assumption must be that they will be far from offended by *F.I.S.T.* The second point is that the international union is now taken to be on the same plane, without change of emphasis or color, as the international corporation—Up There, Out There somewhere, just a part of the canvas on which a picture can be painted.

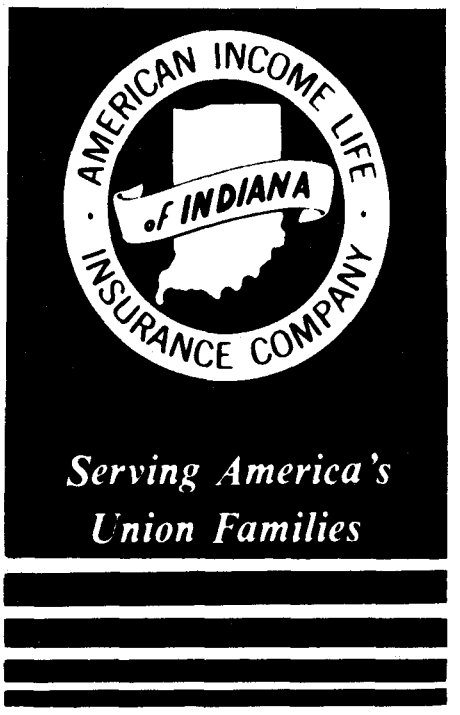
It's interesting too that this picture comes along almost simultaneously with *Blue Collar*, made by Paul Schrader, whose approach to film could hardly have been more different from Stallone's. Schrader began as a critic, author of a book on "transcendental" directors, editor of a serious film journal. His intent in *Blue Collar* was not Stallone's: to make not a blockbuster but a probing social commentary. Glib film reviewers called *Blue Collar* Marxist, but many of them were the same reviewers who called *The Godfather* a paradigm of capitalism. (For a relevant and truly enlightening comment on Marxism, see Marshall Berman's article in the first issue of *Bennington Review*.) Still Schrader's film is, accidentally, a sequel to *F.I.S.T.* Two very different young men have looked at the labor movement and some of its results: and implicitly they underwrite what Bernard Shaw said 50 years ago: "Trade Unionism is not Socialism: it is the Capitalism of the Proletariat."

Three Poems

by Angel González

translated by Allen Josephs

These poems are from Angel González's last book, *Muestra* (Sampler), published last June in Madrid. The translator, Allen Josephs, teaches Spanish literature at The University of West Florida. González's earlier book, *Harsh World and Other Poems*, translated by Donald Walsh, was published in 1977 by Princeton University Press.



Comparative Financial Review

	Years ended December 31, 1977	1976
Income		
Life premiums	$22,340,297	$16,150,742
Accident and health premiums	25,683,413	23,593,214
Investment and other income	4,799,481	4,090,525
Total income	52,823,191	43,834,481
Benefits and expenses		
Life claims and other benefits	4,126,231	3,735,055
Accident and health claims	12,430,024	11,644,002
Increase in liability for future policy benefits	12,196,239	8,711,984
Amortization of policy acquisition costs	5,183,133	4,431,061
Commissions	5,943,151	5,224,771
General expenses and insurance taxes	5,869,697	5,652,642
Dividends to policyholders	298,064	299,032
	46,046,539	39,698,547
Income before income taxes and realized investment gains (losses)	6,776,652	4,135,934
Provision for income taxes		
Current	—	—
Deferred	1,909,150	1,209,252
Income before realized investment gains (losses)	4,867,502	2,926,682
Realized investment gains (losses)	11,364	356,057
Net income	$ 4,878,866	$ 3,282,739
Earnings per share		
Income before realized investment gains (losses)	$ 2.88	$ 1.76
Realized investment gains (losses)	.01	.21
Net income	$ 2.89	$ 1.97

Assets	$116,000,000
Insurance in Force	$ 1,289,000

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Notes of a Voyager

For José Ramón Marra-López

Summer is always the same here:
stifling and sultry.
Yet
a few short years ago
the landscape was not this way.
It was
cleaner and more peaceful, they tell me,
clearer, more serene.

Now
the Empire has contracted its frontiers
and the hangover of a dubious peace
has drawn to the metropolis
from the farthest reaches of the earth
a colorful and dangerous troop:
adventurers, merchants,
soldiers of fortune, prostitutes, slaves
recently freed, strolling musicians,
false prophets, diviners, bonzes,
mendicants and thieves
who practice their trades when they can.

Everyone threatens everyone,
some from arrogance, some from fear.
Near the villas of the senators
insolent bonfires
betray the presence of the barbarians.
They have arrived here with their drums,
are roasting cheap meat in the open and singing
songs learned in their distant lands.
They commemorate nothing: they remember,
repeating rhythms, dreams and words
which very soon
shall lose all sense.
Traitors to their people,
exiled
for their treachery,
they are despised
by those who,
having used them improvidently,
take them in now with disgust:
perhaps one day
this can be the fatherland of their sons,
but it will never belong to them.
Their only country is that music,
the smoke and the nostalgia
their fires and their songs are raising.

Close to the Capitoline
are tonsured mendicant monks,
anointed with ashes and purple,
preaching and begging meekly
for attention and pieces of change.
Proud blacks,
but yesterday slaves,
gaze at the light-skinned girls
with aggressive smiles
and spit when the soldiers pass.
(For less they used to hang them.)

From their pedestals
the Fathers of the Patria
contemplate disdainfully
the corrosive effect of passing days
on the glory they once minted.
Now they are only stone or bronze, effigies,
the profiles on coins, time as gone
as their vibrant words, converted
now into dead letters that decorate
the solemn marbles erected in their honor.

The air smells of smoke and magnolias.
A humid heat rises from the earth
and the wind has stopped.
In the illusory peace of the park children
play in Spanish.
Along the Potomac indolent oarsmen
seek the shady side of the afternoon.

Acoma, New Mexico, December, 5:15 P.M.

With such inconsistent materials
—light in the dust,
the web of a spider,
the branches of a bush,
space, solitude, birds, wind—

before my eyes
the afternoon raised
a monument of seemingly
inextinguishable beauty:

immense pavilions of silence,
galleries opening on the deepest abyss,
columns of dazzling reflections,
terse sheets of metal, tenuous,
transparent as glass.

But all that
—statue or fortress—
no sooner than erected,
opened two large wings of mystery
and lost itself in a black and rapid flight.

Now all that remains
of its lucid presence
is a desolate empty pedestal
of shadow, and chill, and night, and abandon.

Oneiric Digression

The conquerors,
after receiving ovations, kisses and flags,
laurel wreaths, medals, cigarettes,
tin stars, booty and glory,
heard
at the end of the day
one last inflexible order:
throw down your arms,
break ranks calmly and quietly
disperse.

The victory
had been an error of the high command,
less
perhaps than an illusion
—maybe treachery or a lie.

Their heroic dream,
their hymns,
their grandeur
their Empire of smoke and blood,
were abolished,
tinged by decree with ignominy.

A few
never did find out.
And the cloudy doubt suggested
by their opened and astonished eyes
never managed to undo that smile,
insolent, distant, hard, frozen
forever on their lips
by the bitter rictus of death.

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The New Republic Moves Uptown

In January 1935, shortly after the first performance of *Waiting for Lefty*, *The New Republic* moved away from its old brownstone house in Chelsea. Etienne and Lucie, the butler and the cook, retired to northern Italy with their modest savings. Soon afterward the house was torn down, with its neighbors on either side, and was replaced by a drab apartment building.

I had spent five happy years in the house, always stimulated, in the midst of the Depression, by new crises in the world and the need for making new decisions. When new talents appeared in literature, they liked to be printed in *The New Republic*. John Cheever sent us his first narrative, written when he was 17; "Expelled from Prep School" was its original title. I found it in a pile of unsolicited manuscripts, was charmed by its candor, and persuaded my senior colleagues to accept it—"But first cut it down by half," Bruce Bliven said. A year later John appeared at the office, a fresh-faced boy with an engaging smile and a stubborn jaw. He was determined to become a professional writer while living on an allowance of 10 dollars a week from his older brother. Soon he was publishing stories in magazines that didn't pay for contributions. "Your stories are too long for other magazines," I told him one Friday evening after dinner. "Tomorrow try writing a story of not more than a thousand words, say three and a half of your pages. Write another of the same length on Sunday, another on Monday, and still another on Tuesday. Bring them all to the office on Wednesday afternoon"—that was my time for receiving callers—"and I'll see if I can't get you some money for them."

John wrote the four stories. *The New Republic* seldom printed fiction, but one of the four could be regarded as a "color piece" about a burlesque theatre, and I passed it along to my colleagues. "Yes. Lively and short," Bruce said. The other three stories, clearly fictions, I sent to Katherine White of *The New Yorker*. She accepted two of them, and that was the beginning of John's professional career.

I must have offered good advice to others who came to see me on Wednesday afternoons, but I was ashamed of giving only that to callers some of whom plainly needed a meal. By selling books that we hadn't space enough to notice, I established a reviewers' loan fund and was able to dole out a few dollars in emergencies. Young writers had a hard time of it in those early Depression years before the Federal Writers' Project. Whenever possible I gave them books to review, and I was often pleasantly surprised by their work. At other times I had to recast and retype a grubby manuscript before the reviewer could be sent a check for it; that was the cost of being softhearted.

I didn't find a book for Erskine Caldwell when he appeared in the late summer of 1931, looking, it seemed to me, like a wooden derrick, tall, solidly carpentered, but without much flesh on his beams. I had seen his work in little magazines and had been impressed by his first collection, *American Earth*, which had been published earlier in the year; it revealed a new sensibility and a natural, almost instinctive gift for storytelling. On an impulse I warned him against book reviewing, which might weaken that natural gift by making him self-conscious. Besides, I said, it wouldn't earn him a living. Before clumping downstairs, Caldwell told me that he had lately finished a novel—it was *Tobacco Road*—which had been accepted for spring publication. What he didn't tell me was that he had been living on rye bread and rat-trap cheese, with a 10-cent bowl of soup in the evening, while trying to write a second novel.

There was always a book for Robert Cantwell, who, at the time, was almost as needy. He had a gift for broad perspectives. His reviews were full of anger or admiration based on his feeling that everything in literature was connected with some great historical movement, usually the struggle for socialism. Soon we found him a place on *The New Republic* staff. While there he finished a second book, *The Land of Plenty*, which still seems the best of the proletarian novels, and he laid ambitious plans for a third book. Then white-haired, soft-spoken Lincoln Steffens came to the office bent on hiring him away from us. He wanted Cantwell to become the well-salaried biographer of his friend the Boston philanthropist E.A. Filene.

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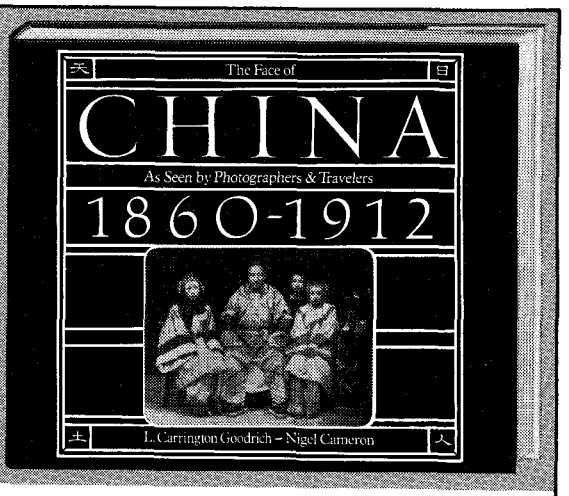

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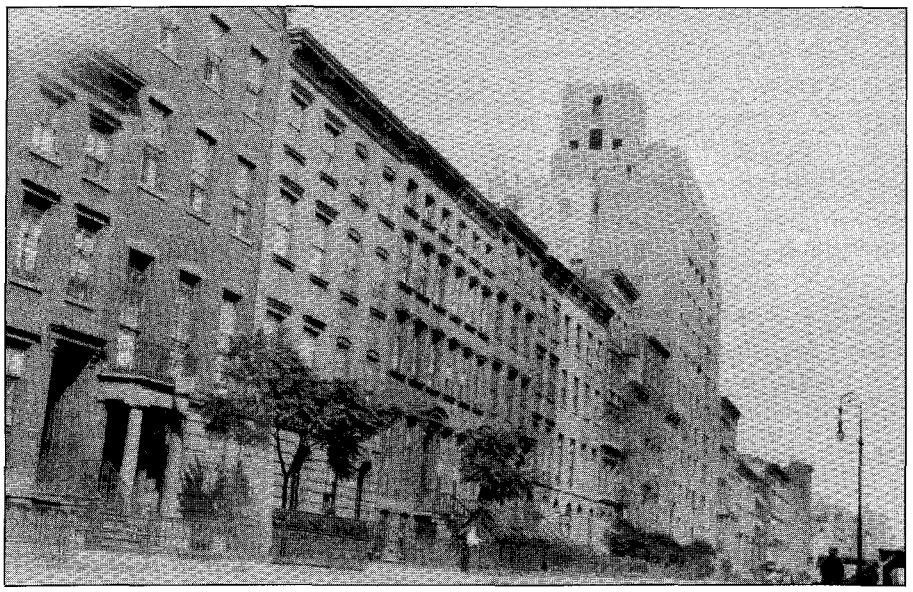
I was against the project on the ground that Cantwell was a born novelist who shouldn't waste his time writing biographies. With Bruce assenting, I suggested an arrangement by which he would stay on *The New Republic* at a higher salary, but only for six months each year, while devoting the other six months to his novel. Cantwell refused; he said that writing the life of Filene would give him a chance to demonstrate the utter failure of philanthropy even when it was guided by the best intentions. He went off to Boston to start his researches. The biography was written, so I heard, but it was never published and Cantwell wouldn't talk about it. Later he went to work for *Time* at a still higher salary. The ambitious third novel died in embryo.



Before the move: "TNR" Headquarters on West 21st St., New York City

Cantwell's place on *The New Republic* had been taken by Otis Ferguson, whom I first met in the autumn of 1933. He was a black-haired, sharp-featured, rather saturnine young man with decided opinions about books and people, often spoken from the corner of his mouth. He didn't talk much about himself, but he told me that he had served four years in the navy after enlisting at 17. He then worked his way through Clark University, in Worcester, Massachusetts, where he was editor of the senior yearbook, besides winning one of the first prizes in a *New Republic* college-writing contest. Now that he was trying his luck as a freelance, he wondered whether we wouldn't give him a book to review. . . . I gave him a book, one that other reviewers were praising extravagantly. Otis reported the following Wednesday that its author had, in his words, laid a precious egg.

When an untried reviewer disagrees violently with the whole critical press, an editor has to decide whether he knows what he is talking about. I discussed the book with Otis for nearly an hour, not without heat; people rarely succeeded in being calm with him. He would rise from his chair, shouting and waving his arms, and often his victim shouted back, but there were no hard feelings afterward. This time Otis won his point. I didn't agree with his opinions, but felt that he had good reasons for holding them and that it was our job to print what he wrote.

In December, when books for review were scarce, Bruce Bliven suggested that he try his hand at movie and radio criticism. His report on radio, a lively one, was called "Nerts to Hertz." The following summer, if I remember the time correctly, he became a salaried member of the staff. He later broadened his audience by writing a series of articles on swing music and musicians. The boys in the big name-bands, who were reading *The New Republic* for the first time in their lives, and the last, said that he was the only writer who came anywhere near expressing what they were trying to do. He was in fact creating a new literary genre, but he never bothered to collect the articles into a book.

He resented the older editors, especially Bruce, whom he suspected of being pompous. "Did you hear what Buster said to me?" he would almost snarl. Bruce had hired him and was always tempted to fire him, but that didn't matter to Otis. Many times I had to defend him at editorial meetings to which he wasn't invited. Outside of the office, if he met someone with influence, someone who could give him a bigger job or make his reputation, he was likely to become profane, gob fashion, perhaps spilling drinks on the oriental rug. By contrast he was never anything but kind to the timid or suffering or penniless, including many of the young writers who appeared on Wednesday afternoons. I know there were several of these for whom he revised manuscripts, bought meals, or found jobs.

That summer and fall of 1934, when Otis went to work for us, were a busy time for me. They were the time when Jim Thurber, separated from his first wife, was living alone at the Hotel Algonquin and wandering about the city in taxis. When he visited friends, he usually stayed until three or four in the morning, as if putting off the moment when he would have to open the door of an empty room. Once inside the room, he might spend the rest of the night typing a letter. One of those he sent me, on the subject of literary communism, which he detested, was 15 pages long. I don't know how I found leisure to answer him or what I said beyond asking him to review books. He wrote only two or three of the reviews, but they were full of strong opinions that were buttressed with examples.

That was also the time when writers appeared from Vassar, Mary McCarthy first, then Muriel Rukeyser with her revolutionary poems, then Eleanor Clark and her tall sister Eunice, both strikingly handsome. They made me feel that the Vassar classes of 1933 and 1934 had been exceptionally brilliant and opinionated, an army or a daisy chain with banners. It was the time when Hamilton Basso came up from the mountains of North Carolina, where he had been writing novels that didn't sell and a biography of Beauregard that was published on the day when every bank in the country was closed. Ham worked on the staff that year, and we were sorry when he went back to the mountains to write another novel. He had skill with words, and more than that a personal warmth that radiated through our shabby offices.

Alfred Kazin appeared that summer at the age of 19. In the front parlor—it was really that and not a reception room—Otis Ferguson examined him and sent him upstairs with a favorable verdict; later they became friends. Kazin had finished his third year at City College, had written essays on the English metaphysical poets, and had formed a diversity of literary judgments, which he delivered in a heavy Brownsville voice with an engaging note of

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eagerness. Even his first reviews didn't have to be edited. Sometimes he joined in the hot games of ring tennis, usually mixed doubles, that we played in the back yard on summer afternoons, or watched from under a striped umbrella while drinking Tom Collinses or emptying a pitcher of Lucie's special iced tea with oranges and mint. Betty Huling played the hostess and referee; we called her Mrs. New Republic.

Of course there was no ring tennis in the late autumn, but there was ping-pong or sometimes an evening party in the Cowleys' two big rooms on the top floor of another old house, just across Ninth Avenue. Always there was hard work performed with a sense of responsibility to the new world that was painfully in birth. Now all this pleasant but challenging family life of ours was to be left behind: not only the games and laughter; not only the streets of Chelsea through which I used to wander south past the Old Homestead, still a saloon, where Edwin Arlington Robinson in his early drunken period used to live on nickel beers and the free lunch, till I reached the Hooverville on Abingdon Square; not only Chaffard's French restaurant with its ancient waiters and its big room upstairs for meetings, and the Italian former speakeasy on Twenty-Sixth Street where table wine was a dollar a bottle, but *The New Republic* house itself with its scratched heirlooms, its worn carpets, its editors' offices like master bedrooms, and its dining room with the round enormous table surmounted with a lazy susan. There we used to sit in Windsor chairs discussing the crisis of capitalism with our luncheon guests from abroad, while sometimes feeling that we were being watched and judged from the parlor wall by the stern faces of Lincoln and the members of his cabinet.

Our new offices were shared by three other magazines also supported by Dorothy and Leonard Elmhirst: *Asia, Antiques,* and *Theatre Arts;* together we occupied two floors of an office building just east of Madison Avenue. The two floors had been remodeled by a modernist architect, William Lescaze, who, by using a great deal of blue enamel, caramel-colored mahogany, and butterscotch leather, had made them look like the tourist-class lounge of an ocean liner. We still had a dining room, but without the round table or Lucie or Etienne; a merely passable cook now appeared once or twice a week. My great scarred desk, which had once been Francis Hackett's and Robert Morss Lovett's and Edmund Wilson's, had followed me uptown, but only after being sandpapered and painted horizon blue. It occupied so much of my smaller office that callers liked to sit on it and talk down to me.

They were now a different type of caller, somewhat more carefully dressed. Only a few of the out-of-elbows reviewers and proletarian poets appeared on Forty-Ninth Street; perhaps the others were intimidated by

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all that leather and mahogany. I was a little uncomfortable myself, not only in the office but downstairs in the streets where rows of little shops glittered with treasures I had no wish to buy. And those shoppers crowding the sidewalks, those carefully tanned businessmen, those admen flagging down taxis with their polished attaché cases: they were not my people. After spending so many years downtown among rebels, I felt like a spy in enemy country, unsafe in my disguise as a junior executive. I had to admit, though, that the enemy's women were beautiful. That year most of them seemed to be tall hatless girls appearing fresh from the hairdresser's with shoulder-length bobs like golden helmets. Two or three of them came to the office to ask for books, among a little stream of polylingual German refugees. One beautiful girl sat on my desk and let her legs dangle. "Cheesecake," Otis Ferguson grumbled as he passed the open door.

The New Republic gave its first cocktail party to celebrate the move uptown. It invited all the regular contributors, ranging in age from the patriarch John Dewey through an assortment of scholars, liberal lawyers, and labor economists, to John Cheever, then 21. My wife, leaving the new baby with a practical nurse, had come to the office the day before and had joined with Isobel Soule and Ebie Blume to make jugs of martinis, which they left in the refrigerator. That is a dangerous way to prepare for a big party, since the very cold martinis don't melt the ice over which they are poured for a moment; the liquor is undiluted. Almost everyone drank the martinis fast, then shouted to be heard by his neighbor. John Dewey got into an argument, made a sweeping gesture with his arm held too low, and swept the cloth off the new square table, sending 50 glasses crashing to the floor. More glasses appeared and the din rose higher. A young matron was sitting happily on Stark Young's well-tailored lap, where few women had sat before her. George Soule was beaming through rimless spectacles. Bruce Bliven, a temperate man, was looking more and more uncomfortable. "Why don't you go home?" Otis said to him, and almost added, "Buster." We missed an artist friend and found him vomiting in the women's toilet with his wife holding his shoulders. A little crowd was waiting for the only elevator that ran after six o'clock. This wasn't Herbert Croly's *New Republic*; it was a midtown office party.

Malcolm Cowley

Malcolm Cowley is at work on a memoir of the 1930s.

" 'IT IS INTERESTING,' writes Garry Wills, reflecting on the fact that the neutron bomb was tested on rodents, 'that right-wingers who make fun of the effect of saccharin on mice are awed by the power of radiation to zap a mouse.' Right! Let's get to work on a saccharin bomb."

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Books Considered

New York Jew
by Alfred Kazin

(Knopf; $10.95)

"One dreamlike week in 1942 I published my first book, *On Native Grounds*, became an editor of *The New Republic*, and with my wife, Natasha, moved into a little apartment on 24th Street and Lexington." So Alfred Kazin, a young man from the province of Brooklyn, arrived, and so his third volume of autobiographical writings leaps in where his second volume, *Starting Out in the Thirties*, left off. He had started out in the 1930s by reviewing for Malcolm Cowley, then literary editor of *The New Republic*. Kazin admired Cowley for his generosity to young writers, for his ease and sophistication, for the clarity and point of his columns. But he had his doubts when Cowley in a lead article recondemned the victims of the Moscow Trials, when he fudged on the Hitler-Stalin pact. Kazin's own radicalism was domestic rather than dogmatic; he found it hard to identify himself with radicals like Cowley, "for they were so plainly with the haves, with the people who so mysteriously sat in power." Kazin had known about the concentration camps since 1938, and he was the son of poor Jews, immigrants from Russia. Such knowledge combined with that background gave him a certain perspective.

In 1942, occupying what had been Cowley's position of power, Kazin still felt like an outsider. The front pages of *The New Republic* argued that the major cause of the time was to "turn the war into a global New Deal." The front pages, says Kazin, presented "the Soviet-American alliance as a progressive war, a people's war, a loveable war." Between the front and back, over which Kazin presided, there was no communication, although there was plenty of talk—with Van Wyck Brooks, for instance, who "had brilliantly turned himself into a period piece, a smooth Edwardian dandy," or with Stark Young, "all theater, professional camp, and verbal voguishness," and who failed to seduce Kazin.

The best talk, however, was with Kazin's contributors, men who also could do without the front pages, but not without the few bucks they earned reviewing for the back. And as Kazin introduces us to these, *New York Jew* settles into its characteristic movement, which is from portrait to portrait of the people he has known, and from sketch to sketch of the places he has been. This book is not an autobiography in any usual sense, not a narrative or an argument, neither an apology nor a confession, but a gallery. We see through him to what he saw, but we do not see him, for he seldom looks at himself. We have to make of him what we can from how he looks at things.

Certainly Kazin's renderings are sharp in outline, selective and telling in the detail, often unforgettable, vivid as his remarkable subjects: "I have lived my life among brilliant intellectuals." There was Isaac Rosenfeld, "a scientist experimenting on his own sexual possibilities for lack of someone else. . . . Belligerently sitting inside his orgone box, daring philistines to laugh, Isaac nevertheless looked lost, as if he were waiting in his telephone booth for a call that was not coming through." And Delmore Schwartz, "more than the rest of us, expert in anguish. Even when impaled on his favorite theme, betrayal, he lacked the saving grace of madness."

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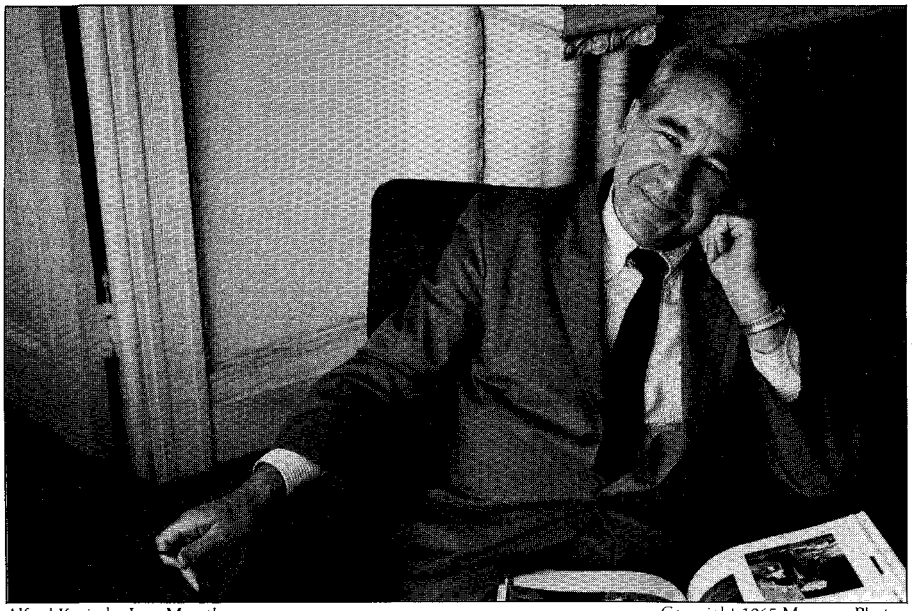
And Allen Tate, who like his poems, "seemed to say and unsay things in the same breath." And pan-sexual Paul Goodman, who "had transformed himself into his own father. Seeking love angrily, he was an orphan turned professional father," and in that capacity adopted Kazin's mistress. And Saul Bellow, "who carried around with him a sense of his destiny as a novelist that excited everyone around him." And the spectacular *Partisan Review* writers, whose "creativity" was to arise out of a historic tension between whole traditions and systems of ideas. Fugitives from orthodoxy in religion and radicalism alike . . . they were still outsiders for all their inside knowledge of the modern"—and in that respect they were like Kazin, who was inside and outside their circle too.

From *The New Republic* Kazin moved to *Fortune*, where he engaged in epic arguments with Henry Luce, who "mumbled and masticated his words as impatiently as he downed his food without looking at it. . . . He was like Catherine the Great, inviting the *philosophes* to his court. But he was no despot." And Whittaker Chambers, "the only American in *The Brothers Karamazov*." And James Agee, who "comically limped up bowlegged as if he had just dropped off his horse," and who "wanted no umbrella between him and the sky." And as Kazin moves on to wartime Washington, to Hollywood, to Black Mountain College, to England, to postwar Italy, France, Germany, to the Russia and Israel of the 1960s, the gallery spirals outward, as in a literary Guggenheim Museum. There is T.S. Eliot, "now the most conservative Briton since Ethelred the Unready . . . a man easily cornered and deathly afraid of being cornered. . . . Eliot had saved himself, but just barely." And there is a wicked portrait of Bernard Berenson, a loving portrait of Hannah Arendt, a disturbed and disturbing portrait of Robert Frost, portraits of F.O. Matthieson, Robert Lowell, Randall Jarrell, Sylvia Plath, Ilya Ehrenburg, Norman Mailer and John F. Kennedy.

The gallery is the main attraction, but on the second trip around, especially after a re-reading of *A Walker in the City* (1951) and *Starting Out in the Thirties* (1965), one's interest shifts to the man. Kazin comes closest to visibility in the aching accounts of his parents and in the accounts of his women, remarkably free of rancor and self-justification, everything considered. His main point about his parents, "my commanding, endlessly resourceful work slave of a mother, my reclusive, ungiving father," is their Jewishness and the "cosmic" loneliness, which Kazin magically sees as connected. His mother chose his father; after the wedding she went to buy groceries and came back to find him weeping. "In some way that was like my father's experience, I had been chosen," says Kazin of his first engagement, which he barely managed to escape. He escaped to, and from, three marriages, each time as though he had run smack into what he was running from.

He married his first wife, Natasha, a bacteriologist, after two weeks' acquaintance. What he fell in love with was her loneliness, "with the embodiment of all my cultural pieties—with intellectual Russia, with science, *with progressive woman kind*, but above all with that face, that dear Russian face, that commandingly austere and spiritual and world historical face that had already sacrificed so much for mankind." He fled that virtuous face to Mary Ellen, all body, the embodiment, that is, of Village lawlessness and irresponsibility, the kind of mistress every young man has or should have had. "I sensed in Mary Ellen not merely a woman I loved, but a dark punishing wisdom about a world in which everything had fallen to pieces, in which nothing was to be saved." She freed Kazin from many of his old-fashioned pieties.



Alfred Kazin by Inge Morath

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His second wife, Louise, picked him out of a line before an army post office in London. She had decided to take him in hand ("Like father, like son"), but even after their marriage kept her reserve "as distant as I myself was glad to be." She was a Jew by birth, but not otherwise. "There were Jews for whom the Jews did not exist." He felt that she disapproved of his Jewishness. "She had not the slightest understanding of Jews still spinning in the Russian turbulence." Soon the physical distance between them was as wide as the psychological. Kazin's third marriage seems to have been equally unpremeditated. Soon he and Beth "fought like the cornered Jews we were." He attributes the break-up of their marriage to their Jewishness, to the terrible weight of Jewish history: "Our marriage seemed to be a Jewish autobiography, not a marriage of minds. . . . The dismemberment and torture of the Jewish family was a too familiar fear in our house. The farther we got away from the Holocaust in time, the more it took up residence right on New York's West Side." The "deathly loneliness" of the apartment became unbearable: "I looked forward to lonely freedom."

Kazin attributes too much to his Jewishness, which could not have made him, like his father, "a great man for walking about instead of talking, for walking alone," a man who always "needed to feel himself near an exit." And it is not entirely his Jewishness that made Kazin feel "the most terrible word is *aleyn*, alone," yet kept putting him in that condition. He felt that Lionel Trilling disapproved of him for being too Jewish, and he in turn disapproved of Trilling for not being Jewish enough. In *A Walker in the City*, Kazin wrote that it was "unthinkable to go one's own way, to doubt or to escape the fact that I was a Jew." Well, Trilling did go his own way; he chose to look at things from a perspective wider than his Jewishness, which in any case he never denied. And yet Kazin admired Robert Frost and

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Edmund Wilson (subject of the largest, most complex and admiring portrait in the book) precisely for their all-American, Yankee, WASP individualism. The fact is that Kazin can never decide whether his Jewishness is a choice or a fate. Finding himself with the back to the wall of his Jewishness, Kazin leans on it.

"I have traveled the whole route," he says on the next-to-last page, but I don't think so, not yet. Much of what is likeable in this book is something unfixed, unfinished, perpetually young and yearning that we sense in this man now in his early sixties. This unfinished quality, this hunger, is as much related to his attentiveness, his turns of malice, his disappointed wit, as is his feeling of being an outsider—who nevertheless seems to have known everyone. Here are the last words of *New York Jew*: "I want to love again. I want my God back. I will never give up until it is too late to expect you."

George Stade

George Stade is professor of English at Columbia University.

The World Within the Word by William H. Gass

(Knopf; $10)

Among the Humanists of the Renaissance, the first principle of literary scholarship was absolute fidelity to the grammar and syntax of classical models. Their argument, first outlined by Petrarch, ran that a sentence of Cicero did not exist merely as a vessel for 14th- or 15th-century theories, but rather as a unique and precious chamber, sealed at one end by etymology and at the other by rhetorical convention, in which the spirit of antiquity remained alive.

The criticism of William Gass is a throwback to these Humanist standards of scholarship, now generally abandoned: proceeding only by slow degrees toward revelation, and only through strict adherence to the grammar, structure, and vocabulary of the original. The very title of this, Gass's second and best collection of essays, both slows the tongue with its stately assonance and raises succinctly this issue of the preservation possible in language. Gass the critic presses his ear flat against every sentence he studies, trying to catch the precise intonation the author breathed into it, believing, as he says here, that "The sounds of any sentence are its bones." And believing further, as he put it in a recent *Paris Review* interview, that "Talk is essential to the human spirit. It *is* the human spirit."

Therefore although style is the subject Gass always comes to eventually, his procedure varies considerably from essay to essay. For he is never satisfied by mere gloss; that would be tantamount to shushing whatever voice is trying to emerge from the sentences under discussion. No, Gass must always *demonstrate*. In "Carrots, Noses, Snow, Rose, Roses," the penultimate essay here and the clearest definition we have to date of his esthetic principles, Gass explains his motives when doing criticism:

> *. . . prose, in essays such as this one, experiments with the interplay of genres, attempting both demonstration and display . . .*

So in the article on Freud (which incidentally gives evidence of copious scientific reading) there are lettered formulas demonstrating the genius of Freud's all-embracing "language model," which "imagines that . . .patterns of behavior are sentences," such as:

WW(I-+P→Ob, Or)

Similarly, in a different but equally convincing demonstration, Gass momentarily adopts Henry Miller's attitude toward women, in order to make unmistakably clear how Miller had at heart something of "the locker-room brag":

> *like servants . . .[women's] . . . awareness is belowstairs, and like slopeheads and gooks, who cares?*

The authors Gass considers in this volume are all very much modern figures (from Freud and Colette to Sartre and Sylvia Plath), and though his three closing essays take no one writer as their occasion, their attempt is if anything an advance beyond even the most modern thinkers discussed in the first 12 pieces. In these last essays, Gass attempts nothing less ambitious than a definition of words' precise function and effect in literature. Yet throughout, the philosopher to whom Gass refers most often is not a modern, but the 17th century's Thomas Hobbes. The preference is revealing, for the author of *Leviathan* was, as his contemporary John Aubrey observed, "in love with geometry," and the *quod erat demonsrandum* of geometry not only informs all of *The World Within the Word*, but also serves as the shaping metaphor for the far-reaching final essays. These pieces contain some of the most difficult logic Gass has ever set forth, but when the lines of argument at last come clear, their insights can seem as sound as a postulate of Pythagoras. Take for example this sentence from "Groping for Trout," a discourse on metaphors which begins where Hobbes began his *Short Tract on First Principles*, with the laws of bodies in motion:

> *I ask you finally . . . to think of every English word as Euclid for the poet, a wildly ordered set of meanings . . . maybe, but . . . right at home there, nonetheless; to see that each one is . . . the center of a network of astonishing relations.*

Yet despite the mathematical exactitude of his investigations, Gass is by no means interested in reducing literature to numbers. No: "numbers," as "Groping for Trout" goes on to say, "are morally and metaphysically neutral." And: "words," on the other hand, "are not blank." Gass is as familiar with that side of the philosopher's coin which bears a human face as he is with the side on which all the numbers are printed. What I find most astonishing, and finally ennobling, about these essays is how their geometrician's attention to detail in no way interferes with the author's enthusiasm or the profound sympathy for the personal and more often than not painful demands of a literary artist's commitment. Thus the examination of a new Valery translation, while it carefully distinguishes between shades of meaning in two lines from the poem "The Rower" (shades of meaning found only in the original French) also affirms that the form of a poem is "not an object . . . designed to trap . . . but . . . made to be because the soul is finally satisfied only by what resembles it in its supremest dreams." The volume opens not with some clever bit of explication, but with a description of Gass's mother,

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drunken, hostile, near death. And the magnificent essay on Gertrude Stein admirably combines scrupulous scholarship with uncommon sensitivity to the problems caused by Stein's sexual predilections. Gass may describe

William Gass by András Goldinger

literature as "passionately useless rigamarole," but he remains as attuned to its passion as to its rigged-up rolling.

Perhaps it is inevitable, then, that a collection with such enormous scope, from the emotional to the mechanical, should in places suffer from overreach. The demonstrations Gass makes do occasionally belabor their points (the lengthy Mr. Feaster passages of the Faulkner essay might be the best example)—though the author more than once freely concedes he has a tendency to overwrite. In each of the last three discourses, for instance, he follows up his most tedious and labyrinthine arguments with a kind of apology, such as, "words . . . leave us the mess I've just made us wade through." Still, the explanation does not always dispel the earlier obscurity. The wide use of pronouns generally causes the most confusion; perhaps because he is striving for perfect sound, Gass tends to shy away from repeating the subject noun of a sentence.

Yet to a large extent *The World Within the Word* is belles lettres unlike any other, and hence beyond ordinary criticism. True, Gass does wish to perform the usual critical functions—as an indication of how he perceives his role and his tradition, it should be noted that on three occasions here he takes time to respond directly to points raised by Edmund Wilson. But Gass also has a rare, special love for paradox, a trait in general more compatible to the creative spirit than the critical. Repeatedly (and once in a while obtrusively), Gass's thinking takes him to the theoretical extremes of his material, and in the final essay here, "The Ontology of a Sentence, or How to Make a World of Words," one suddenly finds him describing this characteristic in particularly strong terms: "a sodomous love of limits and a thirst for contradictions like a thirst for wine." Nonetheless this fascination with paradox may be in the end his finest quality as an essayist, because of the prodigious tasks it forces him to set himself. For when Gass succeeds, when he manages to visit each end of a given world and communicate them both, then he demonstrates a finer subtlety and as great a cogency as any critic now writing.

John Domini

John Domini teaches at Bentley College.

Critical Encounters: Literary Views and Reviews, 1953-1977 by Nona Balakian

(Bobbs-Merrill; $10.95)

In the 1970s we have been experiencing an extraordinary decline in the quality of professional literary criticism. The fashionable academic model of highly verbose, self-conscious, and pseudo-poetic prose, while often striking when practiced on its highest levels, is not only embarrassing when practiced by imitators—it is utterly unintelligible, unreadable; and it goes without saying that it will not be of much help since its aim is not to illuminate the work under consideration, but to supplant it. (Criticism, in the words of Harold Bloom, is a form of "defensive warfare": the author, who is presumably unable to defend himself, is attacked—*i.e.*, analyzed—by the critic.) It is not an exaggeration to say that an enthusiastic undergraduate or graduate student who attempts to learn something about works of literature by reading the typical "structuralist" or "deconstructive" critic will come away knowing *less*; and, unfortunately for the immediate future of literature in America, he may come away deeply disillusioned by the prospect of literary studies altogether. Of course there are impressive, even rather mesmerizing, individual works in the currently-popular "uncanny" mode—but they are autonomous works of criticism, related only peripherally to the literature ostensibly examined. They hint at a great deal about the nature of the critic's Borgesian mind, but say very little about the subject itself. And, to the average intelligent reader, they are utterly arcane.

Literary journalism, however, has drifted gradually to the opposite pole: much of what we read in the most popular literary publications, particularly in the columns, is flippant, superficial, hectoring, puzzlingly reproachful. American writers are not cheerful enough, one columnist claims. Another, that they are not moral enough: they actually refuse to tell lies! Still another columnist elaborates in print his own rather curious penal (sic) envy—dissident Soviet writers, you see, are much more deserving of their "unhappy" subjects than are American writers who, after all, as everyone who watches television commercials knows, live in the most affluent and happiest nation on earth. Most of these "professional critics"—whose names I will not mention, though perhaps I *will* mention, elsewhere—seem to be merely typing, filling in blank sheets of paper with whatever drifts into their heads from the vaporous airs of Manhattan. They do agree on one thing, however: the writer is a suspicious holdout against the kind of blatant, ebullient sellout they represent.

And now there appears *Critical Encounters*, a collection of reviews and review-essays published over a considerable space of time, by a reviewer for *The New York Times Book Review*. . . . And the book is superb. It is highly articulate but not "academic"—that is, not willfully obscure. It is, at times, conversational in tone: the way V.S. Pritchett (whom Nona Balakian admires for his ability to

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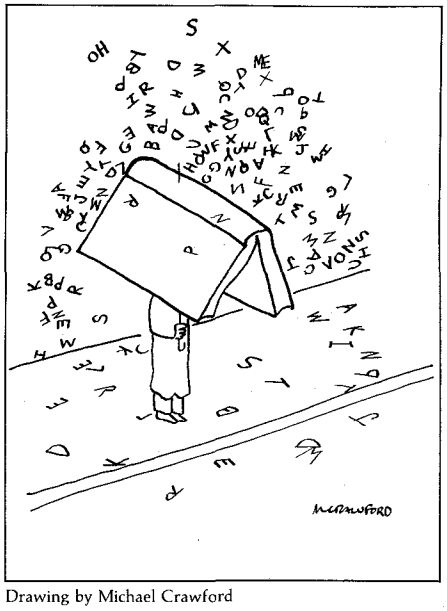
deal with broad issues without surrendering his unique individuality) and Virginia Woolf have been conversational in their literary criticism. Though the book consists of some 37 reviews and essays, on a staggering variety of subjects—Ivy Compton-Burnett, Kurt Vonnegut, Soviet views of American writing, small presses, T.S. Eliot, *The Dial*, the "lowly state of book reviewing" in America, Salinger, images of women in contemporary exploration, and by the critic's pursuit of certain themes which, in her opinion, characterize serious contemporary writers.

Nona Balakian states in her introduction that she has been drawn to writers who conduct "a continuous rebellion with the world—not in an overt . . . sense, but internally, and against a general tide that seeks to crush the individual soul." Dissent *must* be the burden of the idealist in our time. She sees the polarity of dissent and affirmation as one of the thematic organizing principles in contemporary literature, which individual writers—whether T.S. Eliot, Salinger, Carson McCullers, the black writer Vincent O. Carter, Anne Sexton, Adrienne Rich, and numerous others—attempt to dramatize, often without an explicit awareness of the communal aspect of their struggle. Her



Drawing by Michael Crawford

understanding of (and sympathy for) the predicament of the serious writer is remarkable. Indeed, it must be symptomatic of today's unhappy relationship between writers and critics that I found myself genuinely surprised by Balakian's balanced, unstrident tone and her attempt (even when she is temperamentally at odds with her subject) to be just. In analyzing Norman Mailer (our "weathervane," turning in all directions, "his brilliant mind faltering only before the art of fiction") and Nabokov's *Lolita* (in 1962, a "notorious novel") and the "willed brainlessness" of Jack Kerouac, as well as T.S. Eliot and Salinger and Iris Murdoch, and others with whom she feels more sympathy, Balakian is careful never to charge her subjects with a bleakness of vision or "nihilism" that is possibly a reflection of their culture. She makes an important distinction between *affirmation* and mere *assent*. Assent is, of course, only a form of accommodation, of conformity; the affirmative stance "comes slowly, often painfully; beginning in self-doubt, it moves on to hopelessness or loss of direction; but through harsh self-confrontation comes a reversal, a clearing, a lucidity, sometimes a conversion. . . ."

The individual essays are, almost without exception, extremely well-done. Some seven or eight deal with the difficulties of "reading" modern and postmodernist fiction, and with the hypothetical "Transcendentalism" of contemporary writers; Balakian must be one of the few critics to have seen (in fact to have foreseen, since the observation was made in 1954) that the renewed interest in the art of fiction, in technical experimentation, may lead to a new humanism—the novel, in a sense, is turning once more to the "classical ideal of objectivity." Certain characteristics of the contemporary novel (which have begun to strike us as conventional, as simply given) like abrupt changes of tone and pace, mixed time sequences, etc., are an attempt to fuse tone, language, and structure into an "organic" whole. Balakian does not chide the writer for being difficult: she understands fully how *inevitable* experimentation is to the imagination sensitively caught up not only in private experience but in the context of literary history as well. In 1978 the serious writer cannot *not* experiment with the forms of fiction.

In a superb essay that pre-dates feminist criticism, "The Prophetic Vogue of the Anti-Heroine," Balakian rigorously examines a number of rather malicious projections of male writers onto their fictional heroines, and contrasts them with the more healthy "de-romanticization" of women begun by Shaw and Lawrence. In "Realists of the Interior: Women Poets of Today" she discusses, unfortunately not in much detail, poems written by Adrienne Rich, Marge Piercy, Anne Sexton, and Sylvia Plath; and in a review of the popular anthology *Bitches and Sad Ladies* she discusses the heroine (or anti-heroine) of present-day feminist expectations. Her insights are so compelling, one wishes she had expanded these reviews after initial publication. (It is interesting to note that, after having read a number of women writers, Balakian came to the conclusion that the *womanliness*, the common denominator of femaleness, did not really engage her: she was concerned, ultimately, only with separate artistic visions, for "what mattered in the individual talent had no direct bearing on the group experience." Here, so subtly, even modestly put, is the most devastating criticism one might make in regard to "feminist" literature.)

If there is nothing really surprising in "The Lowly State of Book Reviewing"—Balakian examined book-reviewing in newspapers outside New York City, and found both the quality of the reviewing, and the quantity of reviews, disheartening—the conclusions set forth are highly instructive. Though Balakian works for *The Times* and is, to put it mildly, at the center of power in literary America, she believes

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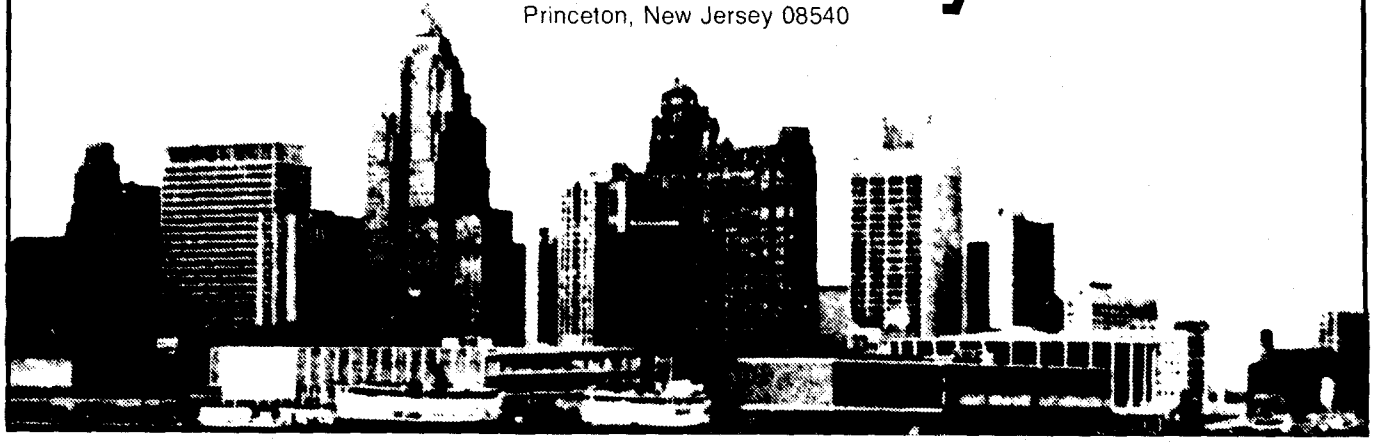

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nevertheless that there is a danger in consolidation; there should be more support of regional literature, and out-of-New York literary journalism; it is a mistake, simply because New York is the publishing center, to allow it to continue to dominate the literary scene.

Critical Encounters is, then, something of an anomaly: a highly literate, informative, sensitive, and perhaps even prophetic book by a professional journalist who has been, since 1943, at the very center of the most dizzying literary activity imaginable. It is one of those rare books of which it can be said: one *does* wish it longer.

Joyce Carol Oates

Captain Pantoja and the Special Service
by Mario Vargas Llosa
translated from the Spanish
by Gregory Kolovakos and Ronald Christ

(Harper & Row; $10.95)

Visiting Norman, Oklahoma, last year, Mario Vargas Llosa spoke of the Latin American writer's agony in reconciling his artistic with his social conscience. In a continent where the press and other media are muffled more often than not, "the realm of the imagination" became "the kingdom of objective reality." The pressure of his readers' needs constantly threatens the artist's autonomy, for Vargas Llosa believes that "the realm of sensibility, of human experience and imagination, is wider than the realm of politics and social problems." Small wonder his photographs disclose such tense brooding; he appears ready to spring, and his smiles are clenched.

But each of his first three novels translated into English, all steeped in the social realities of Peru, met the demands of his artistic conscience in a different way. Whether he treated the endemic brutality of a military academy (*The Time of the Hero*), the interlocking of military kidnapping, missionary education, and sexual exploitation in the jungle (*The Green House*), or the murder of innocence in all classes under the dictatorship of General Odría (*Conversation in the Cathedral*), he kept alive a vision of challenging moral complexity through a series of dazzling technical devices. Each of these novels is more experimental than the last, involving increasingly complicated and rapid leaps between the experiences of different characters and different moments in time. Each is longer and more comprehensive than the last, and the 601-page web of *Conversation* forces the reader to hold in imagination scores of characters, and, in one chapter, to synchronize as many as 18 dialogues. To read it at all requires a commitment of unusual concentration. At worst it threatened to become the concentration of the switchboard operator, obliged to keep 15 simultaneous conversations sorted out. But at best it approached the concentration of the author, obliging us to take into account manifold and conflicting interpretations of social reality, in some measure even to take responsibility for it. Insofar as *Conversation* succeeded, it approximated Vargas Llosa's dream of the total novel which exhausts its subject. How then could he follow his own act?

He has done it in *Captain Pantoja and the Special Service* by reversing his practice and breaking his own taboo against humor. His practice of exhausting reality in a total embrace is abandoned in a book a third the length of *Conversation* because it derives its comprehensiveness from new modes of compression. He retains his device of conversational montage, but near the book's end, he achieves a sense of dizzying speed by accelerating narrative action in the midst of individual speeches. And he experiments with devices new to his oeuvre—military memoranda, personal and official letters, radio broadcasts, journalistic screeds—forcing us to perceive Peru's struggle as the competition of obfuscating rhetorics. One of the most wonderful innovations for a writer who has shunned subjectivity is the use of three dreams of the protagonist: here the pain and hilarity and all the contradictions of his predicament collide with hallucinatory precision. Such a work requires unusually nimble translators, and it found them in Gregory Kolovakos and Ronald Christ.

Vargas Llosa's books have been singularly humorless. He told Luis Harss humor is "conformist in nature"—he asserted that it distances the reader, lets him off the hook. Indeed he fought humor in *Pantoja*. But his first, typically serious, draft he judged a failure; humor crept into the second, and triumphed in the third. The basic anecdote is funny enough: deluged with complaints that soldiers in the Amazon jungle outposts are raping local women, the Peruvian Army sets up a clandestine prostitution corps. But when Vargas Llosa dreamed up the organizer of this service, the inherent comic possibilities exploded.

The generals select Pantaleon Pantoja, "an officer without vices," who combines "efficiency and real inspiration." He lives with his doting mother and his wife, Pocha, who salutes her husband as she wakes him. Apparently Pantoja relishes military duty more than marital, but upon arrival in steamy Iquitos, he is filled with idiosyncratic lusts. Even this does not distract him from devotion to the army, though he is dismayed to live a secret civilian life. He appoints a brothel madam, weary of paying off officials, his chief of personnel, and begins to reeducate his first four "recruits": "Being a specialist and a whore—excuse the expression—is incompatible." The women gleefully accept regular work and the discreet badges of the Special Service, "(1) green for the lush and beautiful countryside of the Amazon, where the Service is going to forge its destiny and (2) red for the virile ardor of our recruits and soldiers, which the service will help to appease." The "electronic brain" of Pantoja then devises elaborate questionnaires for each military base to establish the number of soldiers "UNMARRIED WITH MARITAL CAPACITY," the minimum and maximum number of "aspirations per month" for "marital services," and the maximum and minimum timing per service. Wasting no time, Pantoja clocks his own couplings with Pocha and makes himself sick on local aphrodisiacs the better to advise army cooks and thus to calculate demands on his Service. Euphemism and circumlocution are joyous challenges to our "Einstein of fucking," and with camouflaged carriers loaned by the Air Force and Navy, he schedules his "expeditions" to "utilization centers." Focussing on the contorted ingenuity of the military mentality, the humor *does*

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distance us from the exploitation of women and machismo rampant. But at the same time it hints that the mechanistic degradation of both sexes is a necessary function of bureaucratic authority.

With the success of the Special Service, the narrative becomes broad farce. At their first anniversary banquet, the "specialists" surprise "Pan-Pan" of "Pantiland," as his command post is now called, with the "Hymn of the Special Service": "We serve our Country's great honor/Making love not war to get rich." Meanwhile the law of supply and demand takes off like a rocket. Pantoja prudently distributes pornographic literature to "users" waiting in line to speed up their use of the "services." But he is besieged with demands for services from the Navy (who then want mention in the "Hymn"), from the senior citizens, from the excluded officers, and finally from all the male civilians ringing the bases. To fend off the lustful civilians, "the base gets into combat condition, so the soldiers can screw in peace." The Army's highest echelons are trapped in a Catch-22 of their own invention. "Wanting to plug one hole," a Colonel complains, "we've opened up a sieve and the whole quartermaster's budget's going to pour through it."

Meanwhile Pantoja has succumbed to the charms of the most glamorous of specialists, and his wife has decamped. Torn between unflagging love of efficiency, Dionysiac lust, and bourgeois remorse, he becomes something more than a caricature. When his light-of-love is ambushed by deprived civilians and killed in a skirmish, Pantoja dons his forbidden uniform and buries her publicly, eulogizing her as a "soldier fallen in action." His enraged superiors press him to resign, but he refuses. He did it for the morale of the Services, he loves the Army, and "besides, I need to have bosses." So the Army buries him, reunited with his wife, on the base at Lake Titicaca, where the icy cold will preclude the need of specialists and Pantoja's electronic brain will endure no further crisis.

Is this then a fable for all Latin America, warning that when logic and institutions native to cold climes are mated with the tropics, they will produce monsters? Or is it, as Jose Miguel Oviedo suggests ("The Theme of the Traitor and the Hero: On Vargas Llosa's Intellectuals and the Military," *World Literature Today*, Winter 1978), a comment of Peru's revolutionary military government under Velasco from 1968 to 1974? Although *Pantoja* is set in the late 1950s, Vargas Llosa twice visited Peru during Velasco's regime. Oviedo conjectures that the perilous contradiction of a military regime working to build libertarian socialism is echoed in Pantoja's absurd creation, within the military framework, of an Epicurean culture which subverts it. A burlesque echo indeed! But not far-fetched when we recall that, in a curious blend of technocracy and utopianism, Velasco once answered criticism aimed at his autocracy by actually *decreeing* popular participation.

A grisly subplot makes this interpretation more problematic. On the first page we learn that a religious fanatic is displacing the fragile influence of the Church in the Amazon district by tying himself to a wooden cross to preach. Brother Francisco's followers ready themselves for the world's end by sacrificing animals on wooden crosses and bathing themselves in their blood. Pantoja's mother becomes a "sister," and the specialists worship Francisco even more than Pantoja. As the Special Services escalate in popularity, the fanatics begin to offer human sacrifice and finally the Army has to send troops to check "the other jungle disaster." When Pantoja is sent into exile, Francisco, at bay, finally crucifies himself for real. With these two plots Vargas Llosa seems to suggest that Army and Church, Peru's twin bastions, are too remote and rigid to address the real needs of people. But if Vargas Llosa figures these needs as ungovernable lusts of blood and spirit, how can they be addressed?

Vargas Llosa drops the problem in our laps with a grin like a grimace. The prophet dead and Dionysus in exile, the book ends with all the critics of Francisco and Pantoja falling with relief into the beds of the disorganized specialists. Once again practitioners in a free enterprise system, the whores perform while babbling hysterically of Brother Francisco. The comedy is over, but "back to normal" is the greatest illusion of them all.

Bell Gale Chevigny

Bell Gale Chevigny teaches literature at SUNY/Purchase and is the author of *The Woman and the Myth: Margaret Fuller's Life and Writings* (Feminist Press).

Freaks: Myths and Images of the Secret Self by Leslie Fiedler

(Simon & Schuster; $12.95)

Since the world is so full of a number of things, Robert Louis Stevenson, for one, was sure we should all be as happy as kings. Regal eudaemonists, though, took no chances; European courts were, until the 19th century, regularly stocked with dwarfs, giants, hermaphrodites, eunuchs, and fools of various stripes. *Humani nihil a me alienum puto* is Terence's recipe not so much for happiness as for humanism. Yet we crave images of the pied beauty and squalor of the human comedy, perhaps to remind us also that the category of human embraces much that seems alien. Embrace an alien, and the progeny can be monstrous.

"Freak"—or "freak of nature"—is a calque on *lusus naturae*, an intimation that, however grotesque her offspring, Mother Nature is but a prankster. Leslie Fiedler is one of her most extraordinary children, a freak of academe who established his reputation from Missoula, Montana, before sentient life had yet been discovered west of New Jersey. Brash and lucid, his criticism has been

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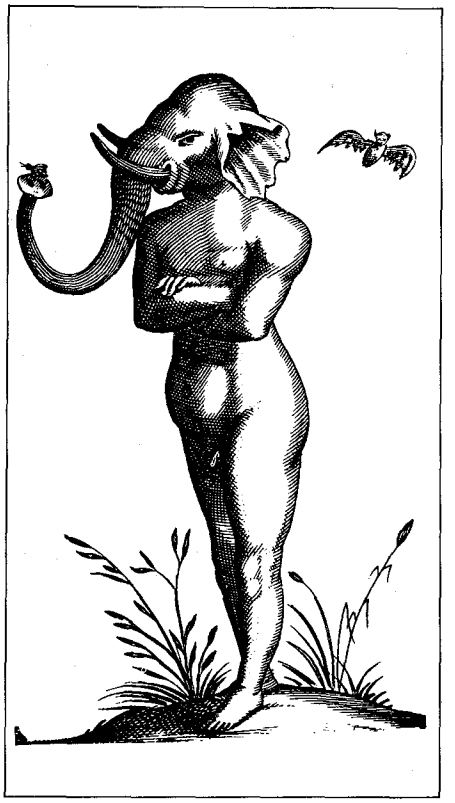
vernacular and personal when it violated the conventions of discourse to be either. In both his essays and his fiction, Fiedler has long been attracted to anomalies and pariahs like homosexuals, Indians, and Jews, to outrageous readings of canonized texts, and to the disreputable modes of popular culture. But, a Transcendentalist convinced that the singular is also plural, Fiedler described *Being Busted*, his autobiographical account of how a distinguished S.U.N.Y. professor was framed on a marijuana charge, as "more parable than history."

In his latest, illustrated book, Leslie Fiedler treats us to a freak show, a panoply of Siamese twins, fat ladies, skeleton men, and feral children. Step right up and read about the geeks, miscreants who swallow live chickens; about the marriage of 58-pound Pete Robinson to Bunny Smith, who toppled the scales at 467; about Frank Lentini, who played soccer with his three legs; about Thomas Hall, who fully matured, died of senility at the age of six; about Myrtle Corbin, who bore three children out of one vagina and two out of her other one; about Lia Graf, whose life ended in Auschwitz not so much because she was half Jewish as because she was a very unWagnerian 27 inches tall; about Robert Wadlow, who died at the age of 22, still growing at 8 feet 11 inches even after his brain had lost contact with his distant extremities; or about John Merrick, who could not venture down the street without being mobbed, on account of his striking resemblance to an elephant. The swelling science of teratology attempts to redeem from prurience our fascination with such lurid anecdotal material. Fiedler also calls on anthropology, history, literary criticism, medicine, and psychology to contend with his awe at the sumptuous variety of man. But he refuses to deny the colloid of horror and titillation which a vision of the Coney Island of the race provokes. Beyond a taxonomy of human freaks and the stunning examples available, beyond even Fiedler's meditations on the shifting meanings of freak, are his speculations on the nature and possibility of community.

An imp of the perverse, Fiedler refuses the con of objective scholar, the consensus perception which threatens the very survival of freaks. His distinctive voice and narrative space are evident in asides like: "I sit looking at this moment, for instance, at a recently published postcard. . . ," " . . . the sort of headline I read in today's newspaper—as I take a break from writing this chronicle," and " . . . the rioters against busing, who, even as I write, are smashing windows and heads in the streets of Chicago and Detroit and Raleigh. . . ." Yet he betrays a Germanic and mythopoeic fondness for capitalized nouns—a tall person is a Giant, a wee one a Dwarf. He seeks something instructive for us all in the most anomalous situations, and he returns from extraordinary case histories to reassure us, at least of shared reactions (how comforting the first-person plural, dear reader!).



Elephant-headed man (1616) British Library Board

Freaks haunt the popular imagination, and this wonderful volume has sprightly observations on comic books, rock music, and Hollywood movies. In contrast, a cursory chapter on freaks in literature appears perfunctory and predictable, a scholarly debt. Fiedler argues passionately for the view that Todd Browning's film *Freaks* (1933) is a neglected masterpiece and that P. T. Barnum's autobiography merits the same kind of attention as *Leaves of Grass*. When, in the 1960s, the freaks came up against the pigs, it was not a bizarre act of sodomy, but rather, on one campus after another, the curious paradox of uniqueness celebrated en masse. To explain how, why, and when "freak" became an honorific badge of insurgence—at the same time as it was repudiated by the physically odd—demands sympathetic attention to the total culture.

"All freaks are perceived to one degree or another as erotic," writes the man who revealed Eros and Thanatos as principal characters in the classic American novel. And, to the extent that it is the epiphany of an Other, there is something inherently freaky about love. Bearded ladies, transsexuals, and androgynes are particularly unsettling because they challenge our certitude about sexual identity. Siamese twins, on the other hand, disturb our notions of selfhood; while feral children, geeks, and apparent hybrids trouble our faith in the distinctness of the species. Abnormally large or small people and those with stunted or prodigious organs question the boundaries of our bodies. In love with strangers, Fiedler delights in our discomfort.

Phocomelic thalidomide victims, seal babies whose limbs seem to emanate directly from their torsos, provoke pity and fear. Sophocles cultivated these emotions within stylized mimetic artifacts, but for Leslie Fiedler all the world's a Bartholomew Fair. A connoisseur of dissonance, he deplores the threat of eugenics and chemotherapy to prevent and eradicate freaks more systematically than earlier despotism could. Big Brother, alas, is no giant. There is no reason why freaks cannot be as happy and productive as some of the rest of us, yet to cheer mutations seems churlish. What attracts Fiedler to freaks is their power to disturb, yet he recognizes that this attraction is itself disturbing. A thoroughly homogenized world must surely be resisted, but to patronize deformity seems to be to discard the milk of human kindness. Nevertheless, to patronize is still to concede our kinship.

Steven G. Kellman

Steven G. Kellman teaches Comparative Literature at The University of Texas, San Antonio. He is the author of *The Self-begetting Novel*, to be published by Columbia University Press.

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sterile talk about the adjective rights of the Nazis ignores the ethical question of the legitimate public purpose of the government preventing the humiliation and agonization of Jews by Nazis. Does your cavalier mention of the superior First Amendment rights of Nazis over the peaceful enjoyment of life by Jews imply self-help is available to Jews? Your obscenity case begs the question.

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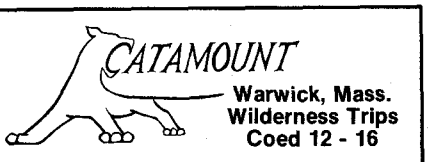

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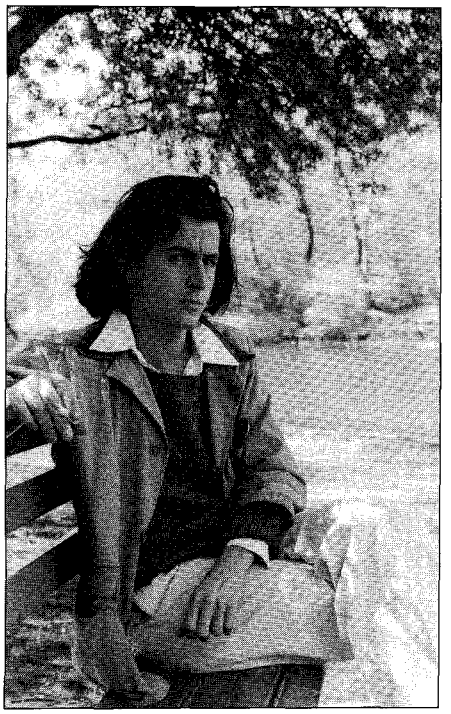
Washington Diarist

Truth in Packaging

There is a manuscript floating around of an article on labor law reform, a worthy enough topic. It has been offered to us so far twice by different friends in the trade union movement and, what is more interesting, each time with our choice of authors. The first caller offered us Muriel Humphrey or some other senator, I forget who. Our subsequent choices were equally distinguished and varied, but we resisted temptation. Maybe *TNR* is too finicky about such matters. But we always suspect an article or book under the name of some public personage—suspect it, that is, of being written by someone else. There are exceptions, of course; neither Pat Moynihan nor Gene McCarthy, for example, farms his intellectual work out to hirelings. One other politician in our ambit who, I think, must do his own stuff is George McGovern. No one else could possibly emulate the distinctive whiny and limp prose that marks his writing and his off-the-cuff speeches.

It's a sign of the degraded intellectual currency of the day that serious newspapers, magazines, book publishers and book reviewers conspire to allow what is nothing but plagiarism to proliferate. They're eager to apply harsh codes of propriety to politicians in financial matters. But with words, which are the tools of their trade, their standards are as low as those of an ordinary high school cheat. *The New York Times* financial section ran an article a while back "written" not by one senator, but by two. I tried to imagine them arguing about whether a comma here or a comma there best communicates the sense of a sentence. I tried to imagine this, but I couldn't. The *Times* Op-Ed page tried to stage a debate this spring between President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin. Sadat complied quickly. Begin said he hadn't time to write a piece, but the Israeli ambassador, Simha Dinitz, offered one in his own name. Charlotte Curtis would have none of that. Sadat's article ran alone. It was in very graceful English, which—for all the *Times* let its readers know—Sadat produced without even the help of a translator, let alone a ghost-writer.

All of President Carter's formal speeches, of course, are written by ghosts. I suppose it cannot be otherwise. But I don't understand why the president's extemporaneous remarks must also be produced by his speechwriters. Because every word the president utters has been chosen with such bureaucratic care, his every



Bernard Henri-Levy by Jeff Vinson

remark—however casual the occasion—is searched for hidden meanings and secret messages. Yet because it is subject to this kind of analysis, the job of the speechwriters becomes one of draining away any meaning that might be "misinterpreted." Thus the process guarantees there will be no insight into the president's real thinking that truly spontaneous remarks might provide. That is why they call it "rose garden rubbish."

Golda Meir was 80 this month. When I saw her earlier this spring she was just out of the hospital and having one of what she calls her psychosomatic bouts of good health. These come either during some national emergency or just after the doctors have tried to curb her activities and take away her cigarettes. She has smoked the same brand for nearly half a century, which means she's been altogether indifferent to the low-tar alternatives. Friends still scold. "Don't worry," she assures them. "I won't die young."

Since Beccaria, the question about prisons has been whether they are meant to punish or to rehabilitate. One of the state penal systems in the sun belt found a deft way of doing both. Inmates on death row traditionally had been allowed 10 cigarettes per diem. No longer: now they're limited to three weeds a day. We want our condemned men, said an earnest correction official, "to learn good health habits."

The UN peacekeeping force in Lebanon is there, one gathers, to keep the peace. But when a French unit found itself face to face with Palestinian guerrilla infiltrators heading through UN lines toward Israel, the French announced that they were suspending their patrols in the area. That's one way to keep from fighting but it's no way to keep the peace.

The most prominent of the French *nouveaux philosophes,* Bernard-Henri Levy, has been in the States these last weeks bringing the grim tidings that Eurocommunism is the latest version of barbarism with a human face. It is not a popular message in our elite institutions of higher learning, where eagerness for another try at a left utopian solution is still something of a fashion. To be sure, Levy points out, the Communists do not contemplate a Leninist type seizure of power. They need not. Having destabilized Italian society and crushed the center and center left, the Communists have left few viable centers of resistance to Marxist orthodoxies. Italian universities, the film and literary cultures, the journalistic community, the huge trade unions all live under a quiet terror policed by militants who brook neither dissent nor skepticism. Moreover, it now appears that the Church, having concluded that liberal democracy is finished in Italy, has moved already toward an implicit *concordat* with those who, behind the flimsy facade of Christian Democratic government, are the true governors of Rome. The Italian right is desperate for order and, in its degraded state, willing to pay just about any price to maintain the accoutrements of privilege and the profits it reaps from the petty *combinazioni* of cash and politics. In these circumstances, Levy suggests, there are no reasons for Comrade Berlinguer's addresses *urbi et orbi* to be anything but sweet. But, as Kafka wrote, "no voices sing so sweetly as those that sing from deepest hell."

M.P.

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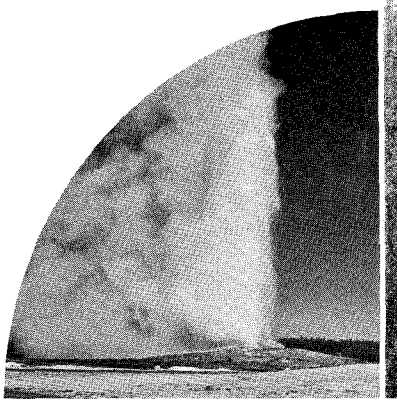

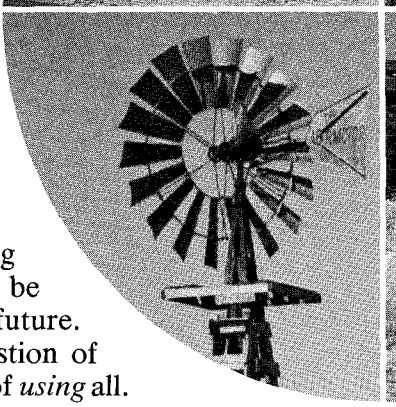

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